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ARCHITECTURE DC

Design at All Scales

The Annual AIA|DC Awards Issue

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Renovations Restore Gilded Age Glamour
High Design Lurking in DC Alleys
Ethereal "Cloud" Adds Life to Atrium Space

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Staircase in the Mathewson Residence, by Shinberg.Levinas Architects, as seen from outside.

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Architectural Photographer

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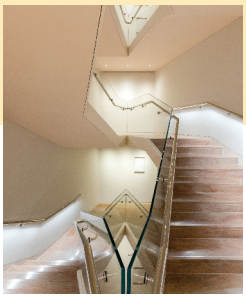
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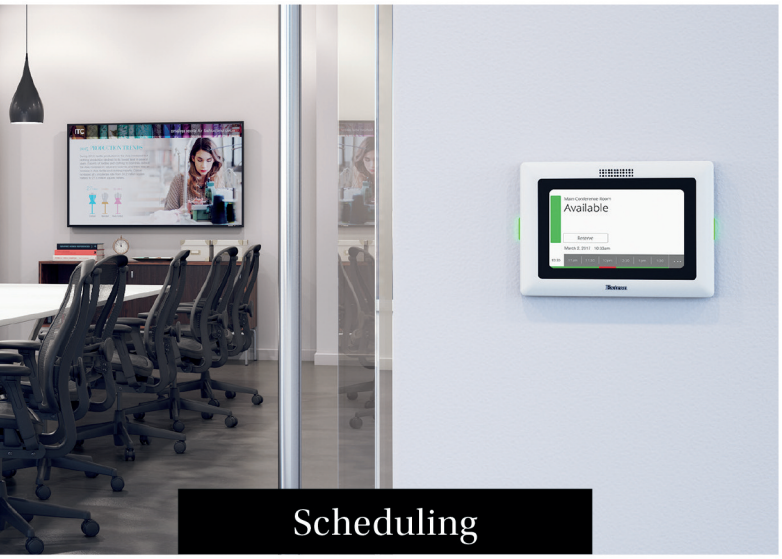
ON THE COVER: Wood Cloud, a temporary installation at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf on the campus of Gallaudet University, designed by Studio Twenty Seven Architecture. Photo © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography



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FOUR FEET OF WATER

Bradley W. Johnson

At the end of September, as we were approaching the sixth anniversary of the opening of the District Architecture Center (DAC), my counterpart in Houston, Rusty Bienvenue, was preparing for the grand opening of the new Houston Center for Architecture (HCA). Then Hurricane Harvey arrived, dumping an incredible four feet of rain on that city. Along with countless other properties in the area, the HCA construction site was flooded, scattering carefully stacked building materials all over the neighborhood and damaging work that had already been completed.

On top of all the sadness caused by the images of flooded streets and wrecked lives in Houston, the news about the HCA site was a particular source of heartbreak here at DAC. Six years ago, when we were getting ready to open DAC, I remember worrying about unplanned events that might throw a wrench in our schedule. But I didn't imagine anything like what happened to Rusty and his almost-completed center, whose opening has now been substantially delayed. The good news, at least, is that no one at the HCA site was hurt.

Harvey was but one recent example of how extreme events can affect our lives in sudden and devastating ways. The hurricanes that flattened Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands and damaged parts of Florida, the earthquakes in Mexico, and the fierce, wind-driven fires in Northern California are others. These calamities killed and injured many people, destroyed thousands of buildings, and left millions of people without homes, electrical power, communications, medical support, and clean drinking water.

Welcome!

People associated with AIA|DC have contributed to the various recovery efforts, and we're also very proud of our well-known Penn Quarter neighbor, chef José Andrés, who owns most of the restaurants on our block, for dropping everything and heading to Puerto Rico to help ensure that people there are fed.

All these events make for a challenging context for this edition of *ARCHITECTUREDC*—our annual awards issue, which comes out at this time each year. The awards issue usually provides an uncomplicated moment of pride and celebration. But the disasters of the last few months have introduced new complications—politically, culturally, and architecturally. In particular, these events underscore that smart design isn't done to win awards, but to solve problems. Indeed, architects and architecture aren't just incidental, but central, to solving some of our most pressing societal challenges.

Reflecting this, architectural awards are becoming less focused on aesthetics (although that's still part of it), and more focused on factors such as affordability, energy efficiency, and responsiveness to the needs of particular populations. In this issue, for example, DLR Group's John and Jill Ker Conway Residence provides residences for homeless veterans, while HKS's Richmond Children's Hospital Pavilion gives kids a protected outdoor space that helps them heal faster. We are especially grateful to our awards jurors who took time out of their busy practices to come look at our members' work.

As we head into the holiday season, I am also thankful to all the people who make this magazine possible. Our advertisers and readers, of course, but also the relatively small band of people who help us produce the magazine each quarter: Steve Dickens, AIA, Denise Liebowitz, and Ron O'Rourke have been with us from the beginning and we could not produce this magazine without their great, and entirely voluntary, efforts. Mary Jane Bolle, Holly Wiencek, and Peter James, AIA, also provided some great stories for us this year. With this issue, we add Deane Madsen, Assoc. AIA, to our complement of writers. None of this could get done without the great editing skills of Martin Moeller, the beautiful design work of Jim Hicks, and the tireless ad sales of Jody Cranford. It's a great group of people to work with. We hope you are thankful for many things, as well, this year. Happy Holidays and as always, we love hearing from you.

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA
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Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP ("Alley Up," "Heavenly Stairways," and "Wood Cloud"), is senior associate with **Eric Colbert & Associates**.

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Denise Liebowitz ("Living Arrangements"), formerly with the National Capital Planning Commission, is a regular contributor to *ARCHITECTUREDC*.

Deane Madsen, Assoc. AIA ("Institutional Memory"), is a writer and architectural photographer based in Washington, DC, and founder of the informal architectural appreciation society **Brutalist DC**.

G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA ("Commercial Successes" and "Special Mentions"), is an independent curator and writer, as well as senior curator at the **National Building Museum**. He is the editor of *ARCHITECTUREDC*.

Ronald O'Rourke ("Best in Field," "Breathing Room," and "Side by Side") is a regular contributor to *ARCHITECTUREDC*. His father, Jack O'Rourke, was an architect in San Francisco for more than four decades.

Jurors for 2017 AIA|DC Awards Programs

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- **Weston Walker, AIA,** Studio Gang Architects
- **Allison Williams, FAIA,** AGWms_studio

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- **Paul Masi, AIA,** Bates Masi + Architects
- **Natalye L. Appel, FAIA, LEED AP,** Natalye Appel + Associates Architects
- **Jason Forney, AIA, LEED AP,** Bruner/Cott & Associates

Architect: Gardner Mohr Architects LLC **Photographer:** www.kenwyner.com

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Institutional Memory

The Past is Present in Two Mall Museum Projects

by Deane Madsen, Assoc. AIA

The Tower One gallery in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art

© 2017 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington;
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko

Award for Excellence in Historic Resources/Preservation

National Gallery of Art East Building Renovation & Expansion

Washington, DC

Hartman-Cox Architects

Concept Architect: Perry Chin
Landscape Architects: OCULUS Landscape Architecture
Structural Engineers: Thornton Tomasetti
MEP Engineers: URS Corporation (now AECOM)
Civil Engineers: Wiles Mensch Corporation
Building Code Engineers: Hughes Associates, Inc. (now Jensen Hughes)
General Contractor: The Whiting-Turner Contracting Company

Restoring internationally acclaimed architecture—and expanding it from within—is no easy task, but that's exactly the assignment **Hartman-Cox Architects** received from the National Gallery of Art for its 1978 East Building. The original and much-lauded design by I.M. Pei (the East Building won the AIA 25-Year Award in 2004) left little room for improvement, while updates to codes meant new requirements for egress and fire safety. When the National Gallery consulted with Pei to conduct studies for the renovation, he directed them to longtime associate Perry Chin, who worked alongside Hartman-Cox to unlock the potential of Pei's modernist masterpiece and add more than 12,500 square feet of new exhibition space while minimizing disruption to the original architecture.

In Pei's design, one of the museum's three towers was occupiable, but the other two held mechanical systems above gallery laylights; these systems have been relocated, and additional gallery floors inserted, to add two tower-level spaces. The new Tower One gallery houses a rotating selection of works by Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko, and Tower Two features mobiles and stabiles by Alexander Calder. Connecting them is a newly installed terrace that overlooks Pennsylvania Avenue. Paved in Lac du Bonnet granite that conforms to Pei's rigid triangular grid established throughout the museum, the terrace offers an outdoor sculpture and viewer contemplation bridge between the Tower galleries.

Within the hexagonal tower voids are new egress stairs that connect all of the gallery levels. The original design included spiral staircases, but they were not up to current code standards nor did they reach all floors; these were replaced with hexagonal staircases faced in Tennessee Pink marble that cantilever off of wall-mounted stringers.

The new rooftop sculpture terrace.

© 2017 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

The rooftop before renovation.

© 2017 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Following a 1997 master facilities plan, Chin introduced the tower gallery and sculpture bridge concepts to the National Gallery in 2009; the expansion efforts and the facilities improvements that evolved from the updated master plan proceeded in tandem, with the new galleries opening in September of 2016. Fire safety enhancements as well as upgrades to mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and telecommunications systems improve the overall functionality of the building, while circulation improvements that include new freight elevators as well as the egress stairs enhance the guest experience through increased connectivity among existing and new galleries.

A new staircase in one of the corner towers.

© 2017 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

The National Museum of African American History & Culture, as seen from Constitution Avenue. Photo © Alan Karchmer

Award for Excellence in Architecture

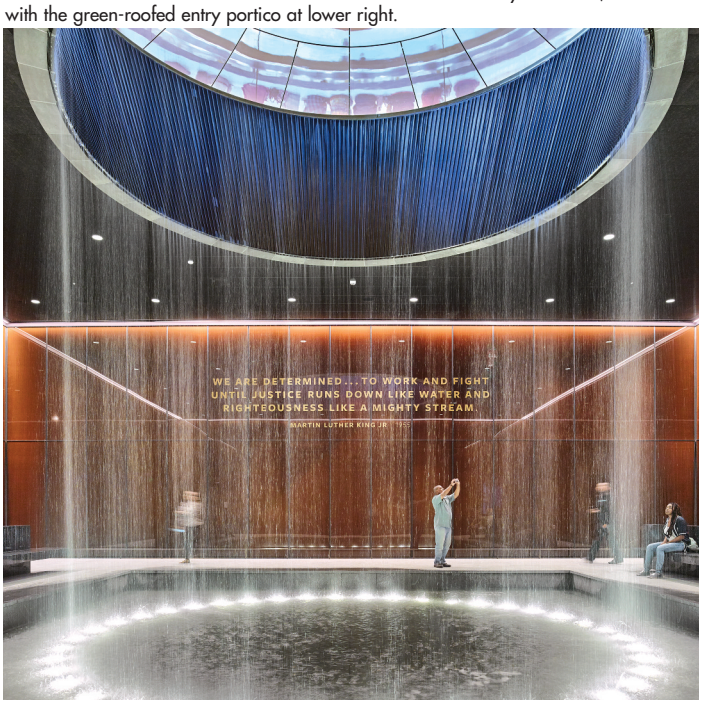
Smithsonian Institution—National Museum of African American History & Culture

Washington, DC

Freelon Adjaye Bond / SmithGroupJJR

Exhibition Designers: Ralph Appelbaum Associates
Landscape Architects: Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd.
Structural Engineers: Guy Nordenson and Associates; Robert Silman Associates
MEP/Fire Protection Engineers: WSP Flack + Kurtz
Civil Engineers: Rummel Klepper & Kahl
Geotechnical/Environmental Engineers: Froehling & Robertson
Threat Protection/Blast Engineers: Weidlinger Associates
Surveying/Subsurface Utility Investigation: A. Morton Thomas & Associates
Life Safety Code Consultants: Rolf Jensen & Associates
Cost Estimators: Faithful + Gould
Sustainable Design Consultants: Rocky Mountain Institute
Security Consultants: ARUP North America
EIS/NEPA/Website Tier II Consultants: AECOM
Historic Resource Protection: Robinson & Associates
Lighting Consultants: Fisher Marantz Stone
Acoustical/AV/Multimedia/IT/Telecom Consultants: Shen Milsom & Wilke
Food Service Designers: Hopkins Food Service Specialists
Retail Designers: Doyle Associates
Theater/Multimedia Performance Space Designers: Fisher Dachs Associates
Façade Consultants: R.A. Heintges & Associates
Traffic Studies: Gorove Slade
Vertical Transportation Consultants: Lerch Bates
Specifications Consultants: Construction Specifications, Inc.
Signage and Graphics Consultants: Poulin+Morris
Hardware Consultants: Erbschloe Consulting Services
Commissioning: McKissack & McKissack
General Contractors: Clark/Smoot/Russell, A Joint Venture

Aerial view of the National Museum of African American History & Culture, with the green-roofed entry portico at lower right.



Contemplative Court. **Photo © Alan Karchmer**

Underground history galleries. **Photo © Alan Karchmer**

Occupying what may be the last major buildable site on Washington's Mall, the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) strikes a balance between museum and memorial by serving both purposes through a program that celebrates culture while recalling the painful history of slavery.

The NMAAHC rises five stories above ground, with a three-tiered, inverted ziggurat form that evokes the corona, or crown, of a West African caryatid (figural) column, angled to match the 17-degree slope of the neighboring Washington Monument capstone. This corona is wrapped in a sheath of 3,600 bronze-colored panels that seem to shift in coloration through the course of the day, and at night glow from within thanks to an ornate filigree pattern abstracted from the ironwork made by African-American crafts-people in the antebellum South.

Visitors cross a threshold between the Mall and the NMAAHC beneath a front porch cantilevered over a reflecting pool. Breezes that funnel between the porch and the pool have a cooling, calming effect to provide a welcoming transition. Dappled daylight filters through the metal panel screens to the grand entry hall; at the building's edges, views extend upward, uninterrupted, to the full 130-foot height. Portals that cut through the corona offer framed views of the White House, the Washington Monument, the Capitol, the Martin Luther King, Jr., and Lincoln Memorials, and panoramic vistas of the Mall. Programmatically, the museum echoes its building's tripartite form with more than 85,000 square feet of exhibition space divided into community galleries at the ground level and mezzanine, history galleries beneath, and cultural galleries in the upper floors.

Below grade, where the museum's narrative history begins, are additional floors that house gallery space as well as a cafeteria and theater, accessible via a monumental stair or equally impressive elevator. The slow descent from the museum's entry to its exhibition galleries begins visitors' journeys back to the 15th century and the origin of the transatlantic slave trade. Ramps slowly rise upward through the exhibition, following a gradual temporal shift to a platform focused on the Civil War and the segregation era (1876–1968), and upward through the Civil Rights movement to the years beyond 1968. An oculus at ground level allows daylight to pour down into a solemn contemplation room at the history galleries' exit.

Opened in September of 2016, the NMAAHC is the result of a 2009 competition won by a team led by David Adjaye, Hon. FAIA, Phil Freelon, FAIA, and Zena Howard, AIA. The nine-year process from conception to completion involved four major architecture firms: **Adjaye Associates, The Freelon Group, Davis Brody Bond,** and **SmithGroupJJR**. The project was previously featured in the Spring 2017 issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC*.

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Dining room in the renovated 1789 Massachusetts Avenue, NW.

Regilded Age

Renovations Restore Luster to Historic Buildings

by Peter James, AIA, LEED AP BD+C

Merit Award in Historic Resources/Preservation

1789 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Washington, DC

Hartman-Cox Architects

Interior Architects: CORE architecture + design
Consulting Architect: Stephen Perkins
Interior Designers for Ground Floor Historic Rooms: BraytonHughes Design Studios
Landscape Architects: Moody Graham
Lighting Designers: George Sexton Associates
Structural Engineers: Silman
MEP Engineers: Affiliated Engineers, Inc.
Civil Engineers: Bowman Consulting
Code Consultants: Jensen Hughes
Food Service Consultants: Next Step Design
Acoustical Consultants: Houghton Associates LLC
General Contractor: Grunley Construction Company

This Beaux-Arts beacon near Dupont Circle debuted as one of Washington's best addresses when it opened in 1917 as the McCormick Apartments. Designed by Jules Henri de Sibour, the building originally housed six luxury units with quarters for more than 40 servants. Its most famous tenant, Andrew Mellon, lived in the penthouse apartment during the 1920s and '30s, while he was serving as Secretary of the Treasury and, in his spare time, helping to establish the National Gallery of Art.

In 1941, the 72,000-square-foot building was converted to office use, and it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976. The landmark designation encompasses the three street facades, perimeter rooms and connecting corridors on each floor, and the entire fifth-floor Mellon Apartment. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) purchased the building in 2013 from its previous owner, the National Trust for Historic Preservation. As a condition of sale, the Trust secured a perpetual historic easement on the property.

AEI selected **Hartman-Cox Architects** as the lead design firm for its new headquarters. The renovation was no small challenge—the building's mechanical and fire protection systems were obsolete, the grand interior had been subdivided by partitions and mezzanines, and the façade was overdue for a facelift. Further, AEI's program needs exceeded the space available, so historically compatible additions were required.

The exterior—clad in granite, limestone, and brick—received a full "buff and scrub" and more extensive restoration where

Photo © Michael Moran Photography

Reception area.

Photo © Ron Ngiam

Exterior of 1789 Massachusetts Avenue, NW.

Photo © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography

required. Deteriorated metal windows were replaced with new insulated ones with matching dimensions and profiles. The seashell-shaped wrought-iron and glass canopy marking the main entrance was restored: the iron was stripped and repainted, damaged glazing was replaced in kind, and structural metal supports were recast in new metal with profiles to match the original.

To provide handicapped access, an alternate entrance was added to the north façade on P Street. An existing street-level window was removed, the sill was lowered to floor height, and an exterior landing, stair, and lift were added. The construction is not structurally tied to the building, so it can be reversed in the future if deemed appropriate.

Inside, a new sub-basement was added by underpinning the existing foundations and exterior walls and excavating to 14 feet below the existing basement level. An existing elevator shaft occupying the center of the monumental stair was removed, and new passenger and service elevators were added. A new rooftop penthouse structure, set back 20 feet from the façade and detailed in a simplified yet compatible style, consolidates mechanical equipment and provides access to the roof terrace.

The design team retained and restored historic details throughout the building, including marble and white oak flooring, raised-panel wood doors, stone mantels, and decorative plaster wall and ceiling motifs. Workstations were designed to "float" within the restored perimeter offices, with no partitions or light fixtures interrupting the ceiling plane.

With a surgeon's precision and an artist's touch, the design, construction, and conservation team has breathed new life into this century-old treasure.

Bathroom in one of the units at the Sanctuary. Photo © Eric Taylor

Citation for Adaptive Reuse

The Sanctuary

Washington, DC

Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS

Structural Engineers: Structura, Inc.
MEP Engineers: Capitol Engineering Group
Civil Engineers: VIKA Capitol
Contractor: Potomac Construction Group

Warehouses, factories, schools, and mercantile buildings—with their large windows, consistent floor plates, and regularized structural systems—are well-suited for conversion to offices, apartments, and other contemporary uses. Churches, on the other hand, have unique spaces and forms that require a more creative and flexible design approach for adaptive reuse.

Restored exterior of the Sanctuary. Photo © Eric Taylor

The Sanctuary, located in the Capitol Hill Historic District, was built in 1898 as the Ninth Street Christian Church and expanded in 1916. Built in the Gothic Revival style, the church served parishioners through 2014, when the Way of the Cross congregation relocated to a new church in Prince George's County. The building's new owners hired **Bonstra | Haresign Architects** to convert the building to condominiums.

With zoning relief in hand, the design and construction team set about subdividing the 35,000-square-foot building into 30 residential units. The church's wood-framed ground floor, second floor, roof, and vaulted ceilings were preserved; new framing was added to divide the double-height worship space into a third floor and a mezzanine. Structural elements revealed during demolition, including masonry openings from the church to the annex and stacked brick-and-stone slab columns, are exposed and highlighted in the renovation.

While the interior was radically reorganized for its new use, the exterior was preserved and restored to the original design intent. Cumberland Stained Glass, a Pennsylvania company, painstakingly restored 132 leaded stained-glass windows, using original and reproduction pieces. The design team worked closely with the DC Historic Preservation Review Board to receive permission to replace select panels of stained glass with transparent vision glass, affording residents views to the outside.

An incongruous storefront main entrance was replaced with a historically compatible mahogany wood door; new exterior light fixtures with diagonal leaded glass patterns were selected to complement the stained glass.

Topping out the Sanctuary is the penthouse unit, which captures the previously uninhabitable 85-foot-high bell tower as an aerie overlooking Capitol Hill.

The sanctuary before renovation.

Courtesy of Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS

Living room of an apartment in the original sanctuary space.

Photo © Eric Taylor

The restored Warne Ballroom at the Cosmos Club.

Photo © Benson Photography

Merit Award in Historic Resources/Preservation

Cosmos Club—Warne Ballroom

Washington, DC

John Milner Associates Preservation,

a division of MTFA Architecture, PLLC

Finishing Specialists: John Canning Studios
MEP Engineers: Loring Consulting Engineers
Lighting Designers: Lighting Design Collaborative
Acoustical Consultants: Polysonics Corporation
Painting Conservation: Page Conservation
Chandelier Restoration and Fabrication: Mathieu Lustrerie
Gilding: Gold Leaf Studios
General Contractor: The Whiting-Turner Contracting Company

At the turn of the 20th century, American industrialists flush with cash were eager to leave their mark in the capital. They hired imported European architects and craftsmen to build (and rebuild) showy mansions in the prevailing French style. Over the course of that century, these temples of wealth were converted for use as museums, offices, and private clubs.

One of the finest of these is the Townsend House, renovated around 1900 by architects Carrère and Hastings and interior designers Jules Allard et Fils. The Cosmos Club moved into the building in 1952, and established the nonprofit Cosmos Club Historic Preservation Foundation in 1986 to protect the building's legacy and help fund critical repairs and upgrades.

The club and foundation selected **John Milner Associates Preservation** (JMA) to develop a master plan for restoring the Warne Ballroom, a richly ornamented Louis XV-style space that hosts weddings, concerts, and banquets. The space was shadowed by years of accumulated varnishes and grime, misguided repair attempts, and ongoing moisture problems. JMA Preservation mobilized an army of specialists to evaluate the room's gilding,

Historic photo of the Warne Ballroom.

plaster, paintings, lighting, and mechanical systems; ultimately, they recommended that the room be restored to its period of historic significance in 1901-15.

The master plan "evolved into a pilot project where we tested a small section [of the room] to see how long it would take to the do the restoration to the level we wanted," said **Amanda Edwards, PA-AIC,** senior architectural conservator. Working closely with the foundation, JMA employed testing and mockups throughout the project to ensure the final product would meet expectations.

Solvents were used to reveal original gilded finishes on the walls and ceilings; where the gilding was unrecoverable, surfaces were re-gilded using traditional techniques. Original sconces were rewired and reset with new crystal elements; a chandelier found in storage in Pennsylvania was reinstalled. The white oak parquet flooring was stripped, repaired using hand tools, and refinished to the glossy sheen seen in historic photographs.

The ballroom's many paintings, including overdoor pieces, lunettes, and a large ceiling centerpiece, required particular care.

Views of the restored ceiling of the Warne Ballroom. **Photos © Benson Photography**

Layers of accumulated dirt, varnish, and overpaint were removed by conservators, who then in-painted, using reversible materials, to inject color and life back into the paintings.

The painstaking restoration was recently completed with the installation of replica rose-colored draperies. "The Cosmos Club takes [its] stewardship of this historic building to the highest level," said Edwards, as proven by this decade-long project to restore the ballroom to its original splendor.

Restored lay light at the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. **Photo © Ron Blunt Photography**

Genealogical Library in the DAR headquarters. **Photo © Ron Blunt Photography**

President General's Reception Room.

Merit Award in Historic Resources/Preservation

Daughters of the American Revolution National Headquarters

Washington, DC

Quinn Evans Architects

Lighting Designers: Gary Steffy Lighting Design
Structural Engineers: Silman (lay light); 1200AE (lobbies)
MEP Engineers: GPI
Lay Light Restoration Consultants: Femenella and Associates
General Contractor: Christman Company

This National Landmark building, comprising three neoclassical structures built in the early 20th century, houses the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). DAR selected

Photo © Ron Blunt Photography

Quinn Evans Architects (QEA) to perform renovations and restorations throughout the complex.

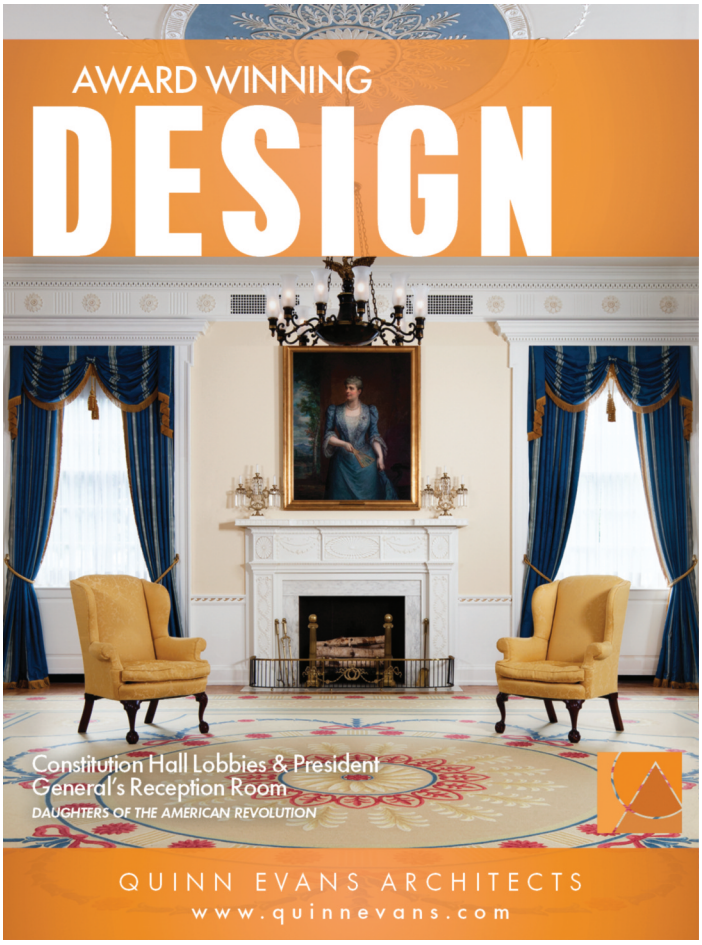
One of the city's most spectacular interiors, the genealogical library in Memorial Continental Hall was originally designed as an auditorium for DAR's annual convention. This grand double-height space with a mezzanine is capped by an 1,800-square-foot decorative lay light, which filters daylight from the skylit attic above. In 2011, DAR experienced two scares in quick succession: decorative metal pieces from the central lay light fell 46 feet to the floor below, and then the August 23 earthquake struck. Miraculously, none of the glass panels was lost.

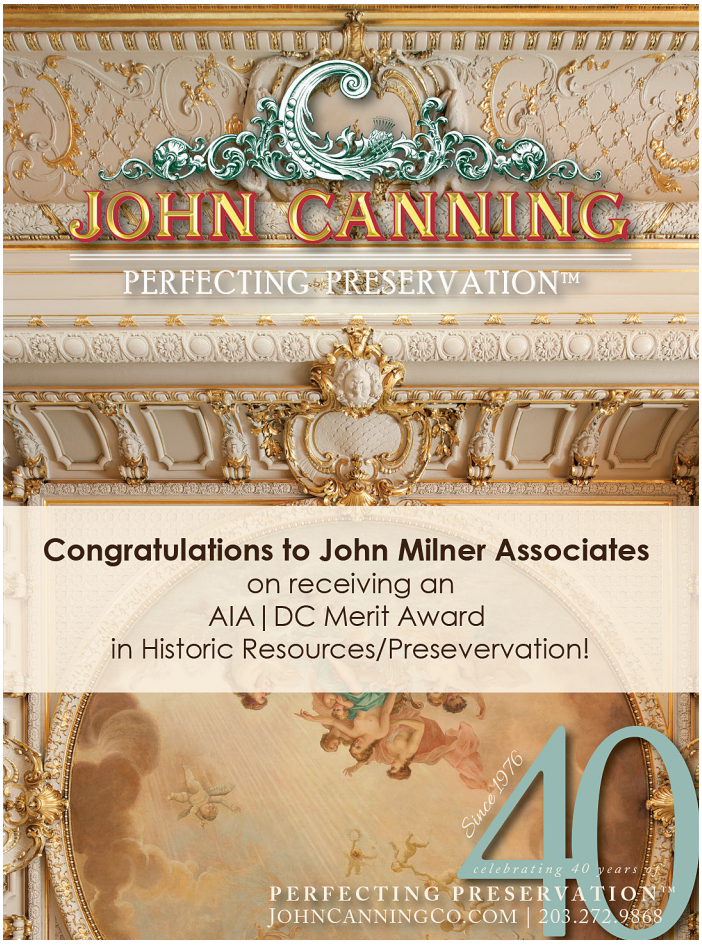
DAR quickly moved forward with QEA's recommendations for restoring the central and two adjacent lay lights. Twenty-seven individual panels were painstakingly removed and shipped to Brooklyn for restoration. Replicas were fabricated for the grooved metal framing pieces (*cames*) supporting the glass; 90% of the original glass pieces were cleaned and reset, and pieces that could not be salvaged were carefully recreated.

Also notable among QEA's many preservation efforts at DAR are the Constitution Hall lobby and adjacent President General's Reception Room. Designed by John Russell Pope and built in 1929, Constitution Hall hosts DAR's annual convention as well as concerts throughout the year. The U-shaped lobby has a shallow vaulted ceiling punctuated by rosette light fixtures and plaster medallions depicting angels.

The light fixtures were refinished in bronze and retrofitted with dimmable LEDs that can be programmed to display multiple colors. Successive layers of paint were carefully stripped from the low-relief plaster medallions. Paint and textile colors in the restoration were inspired by the existing Edward Fields carpet in the President General's Reception Room.

The renovation of the DAR complex was previously published in the Fall 2016 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.





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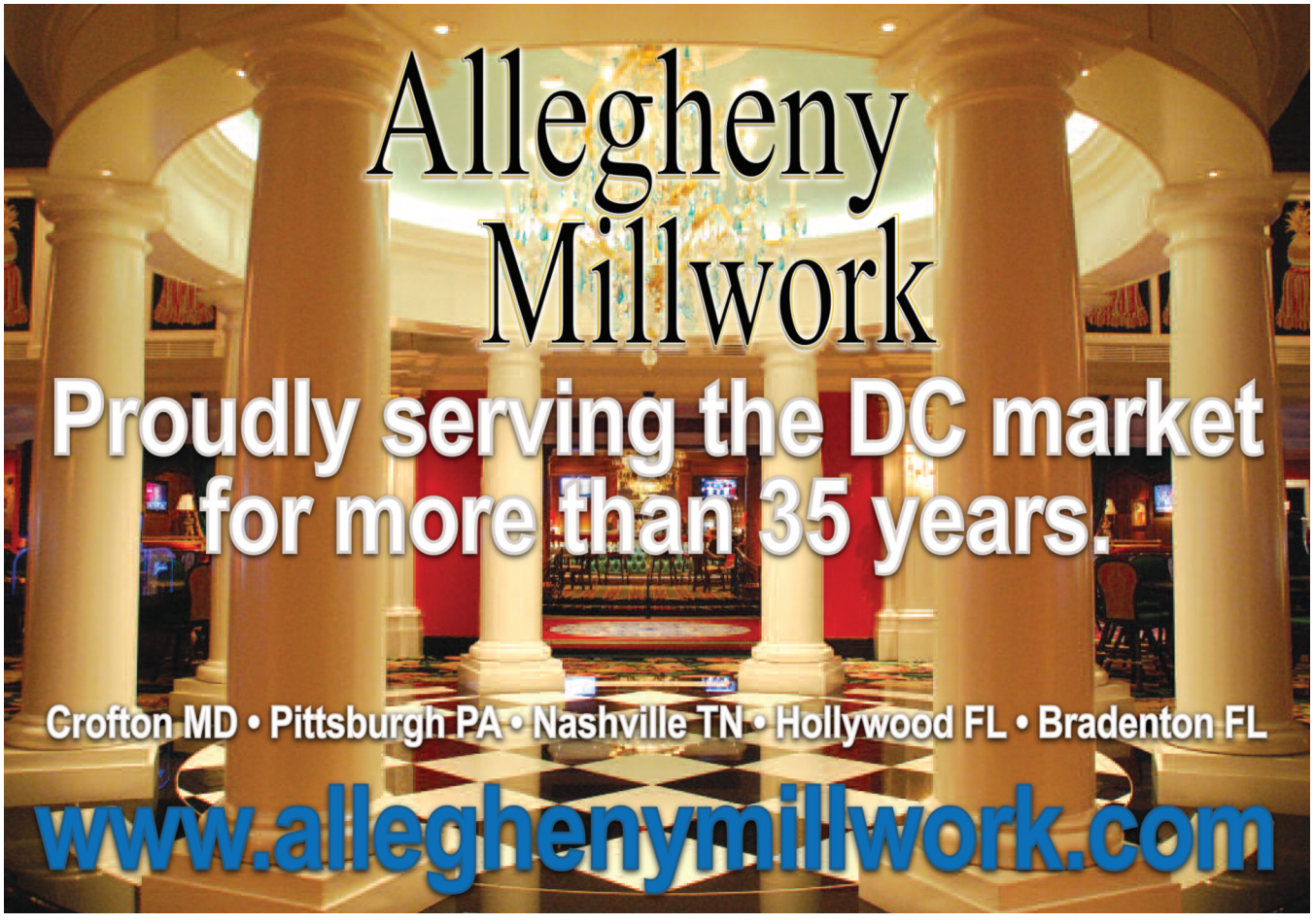
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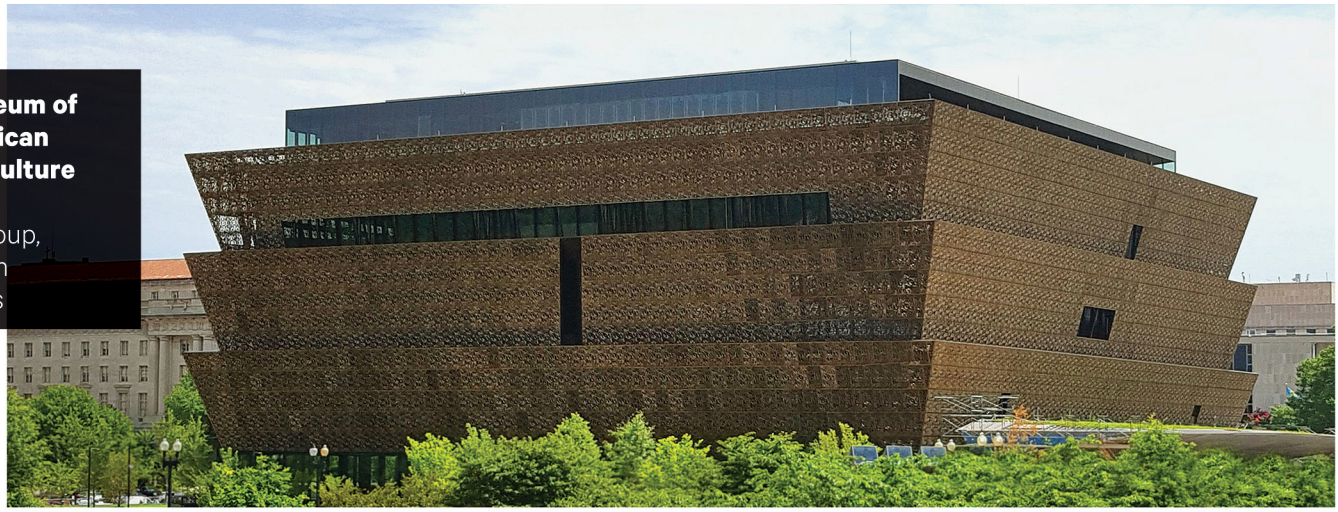
Wood Cloud
Studio Twenty Seven Architecture

We congratulate the recipients of the AIA|DC Chapter Awards and are honored to have collaborated on several winning projects including the installation of the Wood Cloud at Gallaudet University, the modernization and renovation of 1789 Massachusetts Avenue NW, and the construction of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

1789 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Hartman-Cox Architects



National Museum of African American History and Culture
Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup, Guy Nordenson and Associates

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GRUNLEY

The stepped roofs of the Apartments at CityCenterDC. Photo © Aker Imaging

Living Arrangements

Three Projects Cater to Quite Different Residential Clients

by Denise Liebowitz

As one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation, Washington challenges architects to design multifamily homes for a range of needs and budgets. At the high end of the market, a prestige location, over-the-top amenities, and luxurious finishes justify the cost; at the affordable end of the scale, functionality, safety, and durability are more the focus. Among the three winners in the multifamily housing category of this year's Washingtonian Residential Design Awards (one of which also won a Chapter Award for Architecture), one caters to those at the top of the heap, another to new college grads searching for their first group house, and the third to street people in need of a roof over their heads. But whether their project is deluxe or bare-bones, the winning architects have brought to their work innovative design, up-to-the-minute technology and materials, and careful thought about the lives of those who will inhabit the homes they build.

Merit Award in Architecture/Washingtonian Award

The Apartments at CityCenter DC

Washington, DC

Shalom Baranes Associates

Interior Designers: Shalom Baranes Associates; Envision Design; SR/A Interior Architecture + Design
Landscape Architects: Lee and Associates; Gustafson Guthrie Nichol
Lighting Designers: Claude Engle Lighting; Coventry Lighting
Structural Engineers: SK&A Structural Engineers, PLLC; Thornton Tomasetti
MEP Engineers: Dewberry
Exterior Enclosure Engineers: Simpson Gumpertz & Heger
General Contractor: Clark/Smoot at CityCenter—A Joint Venture

CityCenterDC, the super-sleek complex of offices, condos, shops, and apartments, which opened for business in 2015 and spans the 10-acre site where Washington's old Convention Center once stood, is one of the largest urban redevelopment undertakings in the city's recent history. Stretching south from New York Avenue between 9th and 11th streets, NW, CityCenterDC offers dozens of high-end stores (think Hermès), plenty of eateries, and an inviting public plaza with greenery, fountains, and arty video installations. The first phase of the development includes two office buildings, two condominium buildings, and two rental apartment buildings. A luxury hotel is now under construction and another office building is yet to come. This is "placemaking" writ large.

The design of the paired apartment buildings is by **Shalom Baranes Associates**, a large and highly regarded firm that also served as architect of record for the entire first phase of the project. Design principal **Robert Sponseller, AIA,** led the Shalom Baranes team.

"This certainly was not a blank slate," said Sponseller, rejecting the suggestion that the sprawling, razed site freed him from the usual design constraints of historic district regulations. "The city mandated very high retail density—an unprecedented amount of retail—and lots of public space for this development." He explained that even lining the entire street perimeter of the complex with shops would not satisfy the city's retail requirement. His solution was to split the building site, create two apartment buildings separated by a pedestrian alley, and thus provide space for more stores.

The architect noted that a dense network of service alleys was once a feature of Downtown Washington. Many of those alleys were swept away in urban renewal programs or disappeared under the construction of modern building blocks. "We really focused on that tradition of alleys," Sponseller recalled, and on his frequent trips to Europe, he looked closely at the alleys in historic city centers. He concluded that 24 feet was the ideal alley width: wide enough to be functional but narrow enough for pedestrians to engage with both sides.

The east-west Palmer Alley spans the length of CityCenterDC with the two apartment buildings at the center of this spine. But Sponseller realized that the buildings lining his perfectly sized alley must not be so tall as to threaten the intimate scale he was trying to create. The result is that the asymmetrical facades along the alley and facing the public plaza have been lowered, carved out, and stepped back at various levels to break up the mass of two eleven-story buildings—moves that would have been near-impossible on a privately owned site where the maximization of sellable square footage likely would have yielded boxier buildings. This varied massing provides residents with human-scale courtyards and rooftop gardens, as well as apartments filled with natural light. A glassy bridge spanning the alley connects the two rental apartment buildings at the second floor.

The two buildings offer a total of 458 units, of which 92 are designated affordable, and are packed with amenities including a two-story fitness pavilion, a bar/lounge with a glass wall that opens onto an outdoor pool, and a rooftop bocce court with barbecue grills and dining spaces. The triple-height building entries are spare and serene, and the first and second lobby levels are connected by dramatic glass stairs that ascend to distinctly designed interior courtyards.

Architect Sponseller is particularly proud of the skin of his new buildings. "I'm interested in new technologies," and when he traveled to Germany he noticed a number of recent buildings clad in contemporary terra cotta tile. He explained that terra cotta, once widely used, was sturdy and inexpensive, but not always beautiful. He explored setting the glazed tiles in slabs of precast concrete hung on the building by cleats. The meter-long tiles in varying shades of beige and brown that catch the light are paired with ceiling-high windows and punctuated by horizontal metal strips, all combining to create an attractive color and materials palette.

The paired buildings of the Apartments at CityCenterDC.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie
Architectural Photographer

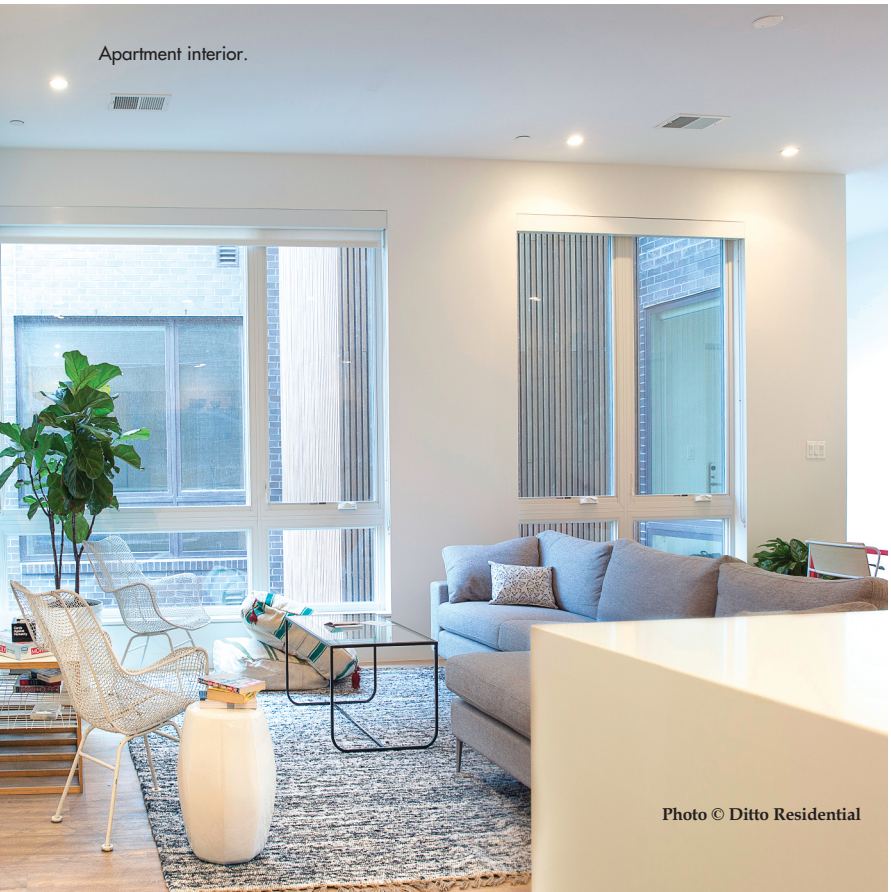
Palmer Alley, NW, running between the two buildings.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie
Architectural Photographer

Entry bridge to the OSLOatlas.

Photo © Jessica Marcotte

Front façade of OSLOatlas.



Apartment interior.

Photo © Ditto Residential

Washingtonian Award

OSLOatlas

Washington, DC

Square 134 Architects

Landscape Architects: Loch Collective
Structural Engineers: FMC and Associates, LLC
MEP Engineers: KK Engineering
Civil Engineers: OIP+A, LLC
Mural Artist: Lisa Marie Thalhammer
General Contractor: Ditto Residential

The post-college millennials and young professionals pouring into the city searching for affordable, conveniently located, and attractive housing are typically doomed to awkward roommate arrangements with all the attendant squabbles over bathroom schedules and kitchen privileges. Enter Martin Ditto, CEO of Ditto Residential, the District's high-profile boutique development firm known for its on-trend design. Ditto has recently delivered the second in a series of co-living buildings, this one named OSLOatlas, located on Florida Avenue, NE, just two blocks from the happening H Street corridor. The four-story infill project

Photo © Jessica Marcotte

Entry gate.

Photo © Samson Cheng

offers eight living units, each with five bedrooms and five private bathrooms and a spacious communal living and dining space.

"Some people call it co-living, but I call it creative housing," said Ditto. "It's just an innovative way to build. As humans, we need both the social experience of living with others, but we also need to have our own private space. Of course, there's also the simple economics of shared space and shared living."

The building design is as fresh as its shared living concept. The monolithic modern façade is clad in a dark manganese iron spot brick, a highly fired brick with a subtle organic effect and slight glaze. The imposing central entry is accented with vertical strips of ipe wood and features a bridge spanning a courtyard below.

The initial concept and schematic drawings for the U-shaped building were done by Kirit Thakkar, a designer who has worked with Ditto in the past. The project was then handed over to **Samson Cheng, AIA, LEED AP,** with **Square 134 Architects,** a full-service firm based in the District. Cheng reported that his biggest challenge was creating the bridge with a straight run from the street to the entry. The bridge, which also serves as an accessible ramp, buffers the building from busy Florida Avenue and floats above a communal terrace that allows natural light to flood into the lower-level living units. Cheng recalled that his client insisted on keeping the terrace free of intrusive pillars supporting the overhead bridge, which the architect succeeded in doing with significant structural adjustments.

On the interior, the 1,800-square-foot apartments offer high-style, low-maintenance finishes that place few demands on young tenants. The light-colored "luxury vinyl tile" flooring mimics wood planking with a distinctive grain. Composite flat-front kitchen cabinets are also finished in a light wood grain and the kitchen island's sweep of bright white quartz extends to the floor in a sleek cascade. The stainless steel refrigerator and separate freezer are huge, thanks to a Ditto employee who lived in the firm's first OSLO project in the Shaw neighborhood and insisted that in a shared living arrangement these essential appliances needed to be extra large.

The living/dining/kitchen space is a roomy 500 square feet, and over-sized windows ensure that both the private and public areas of each unit enjoy plenty of daylight. The private baths boast large glass-enclosed showers and the bedrooms offer spacious closets.

On the building's rear façade, clad in generic composite siding, Ditto commissioned local DC artist Lisa Marie Thalhammer to paint a colorful, 40-foot-high mural to brighten an otherwise dull back alley.

In a sure sign that the co-living concept has found a receptive audience among young Washingtonians, the developer reports that OSLO projects three and four will be coming online soon.

Washingtonian Award

John and Jill Ker Conway Residence

Washington, DC

DLR Group

Structural Engineers: SK&A Structural Engineers
MEP Engineers: Allen & Shariff
Civil Engineers/Landscape Architects: christopher consultants
General Contractor: GCS-SIGAL

Washington residential architecture doesn't get much more forward-leaning than this: a design concept that engages an adjacent historic church, delivers glassy stacked and skewed blocks offering residents views toward the US Capitol and the National Mall, provides outdoor terraces, and is located in the hotter-than-hot NoMa neighborhood. Surprisingly, here the fortunate occupants are not the city's one-percenters, but rather homeless veterans and other low-income tenants.

The John and Jill Kerr Conway Residence, a project nearly ten years in the making, provides 124 efficiency units in a 14-story building at North Capitol and K Streets. Designed by **Suman Sorg, FAIA,** design leader and senior principal at **DLR Group,** the project is an inspiring example of low-income housing that values its residents and contributes to its community. Studios range between 390 and 405 square feet, and each includes a sleeping alcove and kitchen that opens to a living/dining area with large windows ensuring light-filled interiors. The residence also includes a conference room, a computer center, a fitness center, as well as space for on-site medical and social support services.

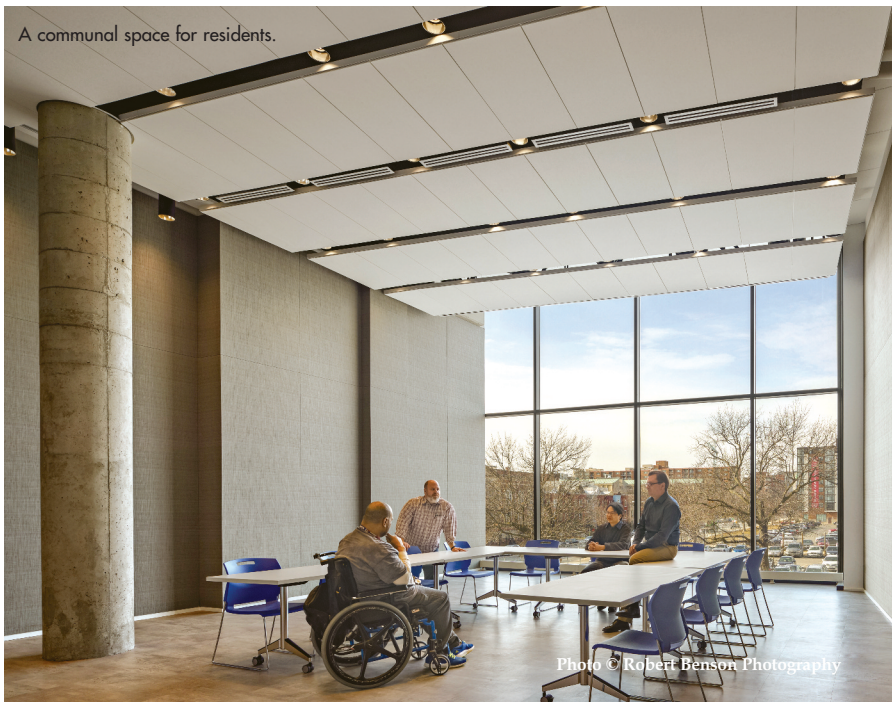
The residence's exterior silvery white metal paneling and distinctive staggered blocks make it a head-turning standout among the more traditional surrounding buildings. As part of its focus on affordability, the design team cut wasted interior space to an absolute minimum, chose partially prefabricated window systems in place of the more costly glass curtain walls, and made other budget-conscious decisions that diminished neither the beauty nor durability of the completed building.

One of the groups behind the residence is Community Solutions, a New York-based nonprofit committed to housing the homeless. Jill Ker Conway, noted Australian-American author, corporate leader, and former president of Smith College, co-founded Community Solutions in 2011.

The John and Jill Ker Conway Residence was previously covered in the Summer 2017 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.

The John and Jill Ker Conway Residence, as seen from North Capitol Street.

Photo © Robert Benson Photography



A communal space for residents.

Photo © Robert Benson Photography

The Apartments at City Center DC - Washington, D.C.
ASLA Potomac Chapter - Merit Award

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The Apartments at CityCenterDC
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Exterior of the building before renovation. **Photo courtesy of STUDIOS Architecture**

Lobby before renovation. **Photo courtesy of STUDIOS Architecture**

Commercial Successes

Fresh Ideas for Offices, a Restaurant, and a Shop

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

Merit Award in Interior Architecture

1500 Broadway

New York, NY

STUDIOS Architecture

Lighting Designers: Kugler Ning Lighting
Structural Engineers: Thornton Tomasetti
MEP Engineers: Jack Green Associates
General Contractor: American Signcrafters

People eager for a dose of visual overload in New York City flock to Times Square, where they can find a chaotic array of electronic and printed billboards, a cross-section of the nation's major chain stores, and one (nearly) Naked Cowboy. Until recently, however, they would have had trouble finding the entrance to 1500 Broadway, a block-long, 34-story skyscraper containing roughly half a million square feet of commercial space. For years, the building's office tenants and visitors had scurried in through nondescript revolving doors—easily unnoticed among the cacophony of signage—before passing through an oddly spacious lobby occupying valuable ground-floor space at the corner of Broadway and 43rd Street.

The renovation of the entrance and lobby, led by the DC office of **STUDIOS Architecture,** yielded a stunning—if modestly scaled—piece of architecture that looks nothing like anything else in the area. The new entry portal, now compressed into a relatively narrow slot facing 43rd Street, is introduced by a multi-story vertical plane of perforated white aluminum that swoops inward to form the ceiling of a shallow porch that shelters arriving pedestrians from the elements. The perforations in the metal panels were carefully modulated to create subtle gradations in transparency and to accommodate the complex curvature of the lower panels.

The side walls of the porch, made of white Corian, continue into the lobby, whose boomerang-shaped plan complements the curve of the perforated metal plane in cross-section. The exterior and interior Corian panels are arranged in horizontal bands, sections of which are canted, yielding a profile somewhat reminiscent of traditional clapboard siding—an effect heightened by cove lighting along the edges of the ceiling, which produces distinct shadows under the undulating bands. Most of the panels are parallelograms, with sharply angled joints that lend a dynamic directionality to the space. Custom panels lining the curved wall surfaces in the lobby were produced using thermal forming techniques in the Corian factory.

STUDIOS' design is an object lesson in how to stand out in a crowd. In a milieu characterized by what architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown called "messy vitality," the new portal demands attention by virtue of its pristine whiteness, nuanced geometries, and precise execution. Meanwhile, the reconfiguration of the lobby allowed for an additional tenant space at the very corner of the ground floor—a change that, given the prevailing rents for retail space in the area, may well pay for the entire renovation in short order. The project exemplifies the added value that thoughtful redesign can bring even when only a small portion of a building is updated.

New entry portico.

Photo © Alan Schindler

Renovated lobby.

Photo © Alan Schindler

New entry to 1500 Broadway.

Photo © Alan Schindler

Side view of the new courtyard pavilion at Dirty Habit DC.

Photo © Mark Wickens

Merit Award in Architecture

Dirty Habit DC

Washington, DC

Stanton Architecture

Design Concept and Interior Planning: Dawson Design Associates
Structural Engineers: KPFF Consulting Engineers
MEP Engineers: Wick Fisher White
Project Managers: Ajax Consulting Services
General Contractor: Potomac Construction Services

While the new entrance at 1500 Broadway in New York is a gleaming white accent amidst the orgy of color and pattern that is Times Square, the new pavilion housing part of the Dirty Habit bar and restaurant is the dark, sleek counterpoint to the reserved classicism of one of DC's most historic federal buildings.

Originally designed by Robert Mills, whose winning competition entry was the basis for the Washington Monument, the historic building was built for the U.S. Post Office in the early 19th century and later housed the U.S. Tariff Commission. Its massive, unforgivingly compartmentalized structural system had rendered it a white elephant by the late 20th century. Eager to put the landmark to good use, the U.S. General Services Administration entered into a long-term lease with the Kimpton Group, a hospitality chain that oversaw a full renovation and opened the Hotel Monaco there in 2002.

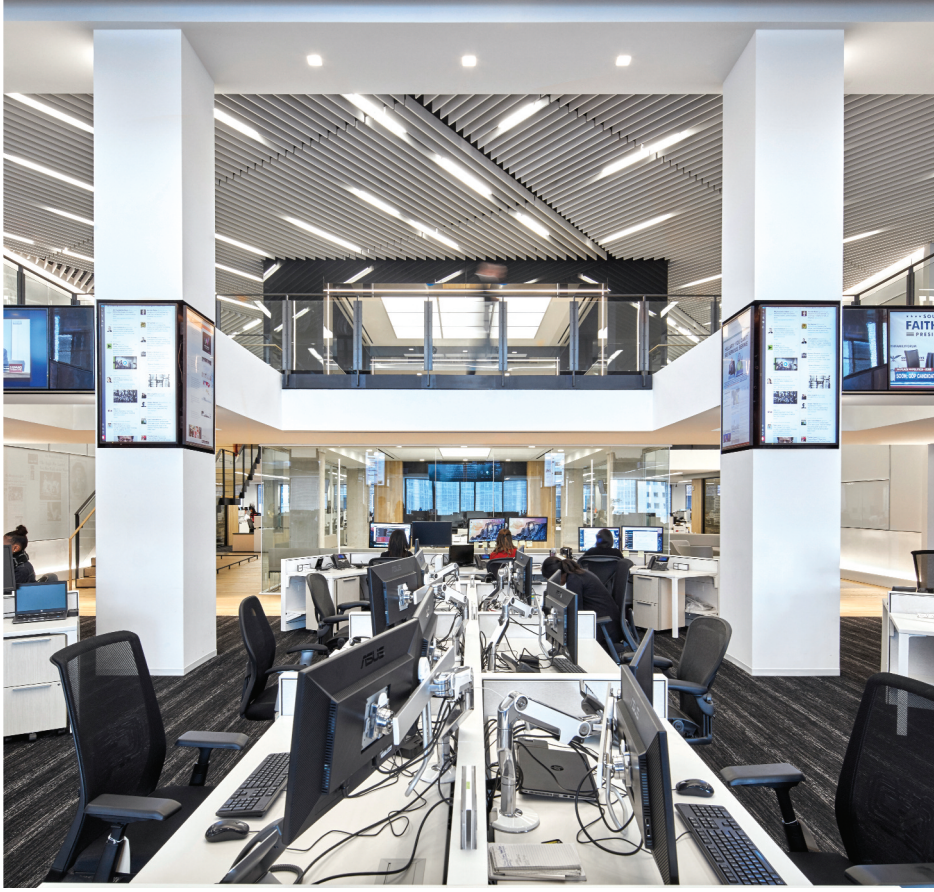
Replacing a smaller pavilion that had also earned design accolades, the new courtyard pavilion by **Stanton Architecture** evokes the meticulous modernism of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Slender, black mullions and muntins blend in with large expanses of dark glass, forming a perfectly rectangular box that is unadulterated by overhangs or other protrusions. Although it abuts a portion of the historic building housing the main dining room, the pavilion is structurally independent, fulfilling the requirements of preservation authorities that the addition be reversible. Adjacent terraces and steps are of light stone with railings of light-colored metal and glass, so as not to detract from the geometric purity of the new pavilion.

The most notable aspect of the project is its technologically sophisticated skin. It employs "dynamic glass"—more technically known as electrochromic glazing—which automatically tints in proportion to the intensity of sunlight. This system not only reduces heat gain—and thus energy consumption—without the need for mechanized shades, but also yields a subtle changeability in the pavilion's appearance over the course of the day. Under certain lighting conditions, the effect can be uncanny, as the new structure all but disappears from the viewer's consciousness while reflecting the stone façades that surround it.

The courtyard pavilion with the glass tinted at different levels.

Photos © Mark Wickens

New headquarters of *The Washington Post*.



The News Hub of *The Washington Post*.

Photos © Garrett Rowland

Merit Award in Interior Architecture

The Washington Post

Washington, DC

Gensler

Lighting Designers: SBLD Studio
Structural Engineers: SK&A Associates
MEP Engineers: WSP USA
Audiovisual/IT Consultants: CMS Innovative Consultants
Fire/Life Safety Consultants: Aon Fire Protection Engineering Corporation
Food Service Consultants: Woodburn & Associates, Inc.
Branding Consultants: PhotoWorksGroup
Broadcast Consultants: Severn
Contractor: rand* construction corporation

The new home of *The Washington Post,* occupying all or part of six floors in the office building at One Franklin Square, seems to refute the prevailing wisdom that traditional news media are moribund. The two-story newsroom, in particular, accommodating a staff of nearly 1,000 people, veritably hums with activity day and night. The space exudes a sense of purpose, an atmosphere of history-in-the-making, and a forward-looking spirit supported by state-of-the-art communications technologies.

Designed by **Gensler,** the newsroom has an open plan punctuated by specialized core spaces that reflect the unique workings of the newspaper and its related online services. The double-height News Hub, as its name implies, is the nerve center of the operation, with a band of monitors displaying a wide variety of information including breaking news, reader/viewer analytics, and social media feeds. Adjacent to that hub is a conference room named for longtime *Post* editor Ben Bradlee, where the senior editorial team meets to review draft stories and discuss placement priorities. The conference room's glass walls not only reflect the sense of transparency that the newspaper considers vital to its corporate culture, but also afford useful lines of sight between meeting participants and staff members in the hub and other surrounding spaces.

Nestled amid the open-plan newsroom are several "open set positions," which are essentially informal, unenclosed broadcast studios. Reports and interviews broadcast from these sites—with working staff members visible in the background—convey a sense of immediacy and journalistic credibility. Also scattered throughout the space are various collaboration areas in varying sizes and degrees of enclosure.

With its open office landscapes, ocean of computer screens, and largely neutral palette—black, white, gray, and light wood, with accents in a medium blue reminiscent of a blank video screen—the interior evokes a high-tech start-up. At the same time, it reflects a high degree of organization and sophistication befitting a venerable news organization. The space thus perfectly captures the company's current ethos, which seeks to honor its history while successfully competing in the rapidly changing media environment.

The Washington Post interior was previously covered in the Fall 2017 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.

Citation for Detail

Aesop The Shay

Washington, DC

David Jameson Architect

General Contractor: Madden, CCI

The Australian cosmetics firm Aesop is perhaps an ideal client. The company's stated goal is that the designs of its stores match its products in terms of "meticulous attention to detail, and with efficacy and sensory pleasure in mind." Aesop commissions modern spaces that, while tending to avoid obvious regional references, are nevertheless tied to their locations, incorporating concepts, details, and materials drawn from local circumstances. The stores are small—truly boutiques—and the products (lotions and notions for hair, skin, and body) come in impeccably matched containers.

Best of all, Aesop's practice is to hire local talent for each store. For its first DC location, in the Shay mixed-use development at the eastern end of the U Street corridor, architect **David Jameson, FAIA,** proved a perfect match for Aesop's aspirations. The design is conceived to be an "abstracted spatial experience" distilled from the history of U Street as a center for jazz music. The brass of the shelving armature alludes to musical instruments like trumpets and trombones. Aesop's amber bottles are placed on the shelves in a way that suggests musical notes on a staff, and the translucent elements glowing in the shelving are actual drum skins. Jameson stated that the interior, overall, is "conceived as a tectonic instrument in its own right."

Most of Aesop's customers, of course, are unlikely to grasp these conceptual underpinnings. They're drawn to the warm glow of the drum skins and the elegant interior that, without apparent conflict or contradiction, marries the organic, authentic character of an industrial loft with a sumptuous minimalism. Perhaps they may subconsciously take the clean, glowing interior as a metaphor for what Aesop's products will do to their skin and hair. To bridge the gap (at least a little), Jameson's design provides a hint, in the form of a quotation from Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, stenciled on one wall of the shop: "Architecture is music in space, as it were a frozen music."

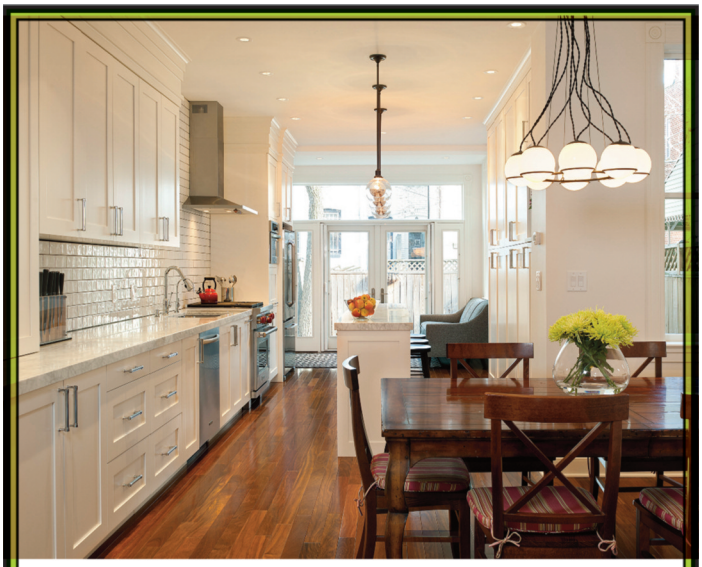
Aesop the Shay was previously covered in the Spring 2017 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.

Aesop the Shay, as seen from the sidewalk.

Photos © Paul Barbera Photography

Shop interior.

Shelves with drum skin panels.



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Mill Woods Library, Seniors and Multicultural Centre - Edmonton, Alberta
Architects: Dub Architects and HCMA Architecture + Design

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Best in Field

Three Gabled Houses in the Countryside

by Ronald O'Rourke

Living and dining areas of the Rockport Residence.

Photos © Rob Karosis Photography

Exterior of the Rockport Residence.

Photo © Rob Karosis Photography

Among the residential projects honored by the juries this year are three houses in the countryside—two of them new-construction projects, the other a renovation and addition. Although different in their detailing, together they provide a short course in how the archetypal domestic form of a gable-roofed house—a triangle on top of a square—can be adapted in varying ways to create modern exurban residences for households with diverse programs.

Merit Award in Architecture

Rockport Residence

Rockport, ME

Hamilton Snowber Architects

Interior Designers: Jodi Macklin Interior Design
Landscape Architects: Mohr & Seredin Landscape Architects
Structural Engineers: Shemro Engineering
General Contractor: Cold Mountain Builders

For a peninsular site on the coast of Maine that slopes easily down to Penobscot Bay, **Hamilton Snowber Architects** designed a new, 4,200-square-foot, five-bedroom house as a summer destination for a couple with four grown children. The design draws on the area's architectural traditions while taking advantage of spectacular water views.

The house consists of two parallel, gabled pavilions that are staggered front to back so as to open up views from both of them, connected by a third pavilion running perpendicularly between them. On the first floor, one of the parallel pavilions houses the kitchen while the other encloses the master suite. On the second level, the parallel pavilions provide four additional bedrooms. The central pavilion, which offers its own line of sight toward the water, encloses the entry, the stair hall, and the living/dining room. A separate structure provides a two-car garage with a second-floor "getaway" room.

On the house's exterior, driftwood-toned shingles combine with darker trim, a gray metal roof, and a gray stone foundation to create a muted, neutral-color palette in keeping with the house's shore-side setting and the region's maritime heritage. (If the term "shades of gray" didn't have its own peculiar meaning nowadays, it would neatly summarize the house's exterior hues.) A partially inset porch and windows that wrap around some of the corners erode the house's basic rectangular volumes, moving the design away from a simple regional saltbox shape and toward a subtle geometric complexity that rewards careful study.

The interior color scheme is similarly muted: White walls bounce around daylight while suggesting a relaxed, summertime lifestyle. Blond wood flooring provides a soft contrast that anchors the interior design without feeling too heavy. The living room's fireplace wall, surfaced in rusticated and smooth gray stone, provides the main contrasting point of focus while tying the interior design to the hues on the outside. The kitchen's island counter and the stair hall's railings, finished in darker wood, provide additional punctuation marks to the interior color scheme. Trim and detailing on the inside combine a traditional, country-house look with a more modern, spare design aesthetic.

The overall impression of the design, both inside and out, is one of restraint and balance. The house's modernity and sophistication, initially veiled by its use of traditional forms and materials, sneaks up on the observer, emerging over time as the design's details are cumulatively discovered.

Washingtonian Award

Becherer House

Earlysville, VA

Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, Architect

Interior Designer: Baron Gurney Interiors
Landscape Architects: Campion Hruby Landscape Architects
Structural Engineers: D. Anthony Beale, LLC
General Contractor: Shelter Associates, Ltd.

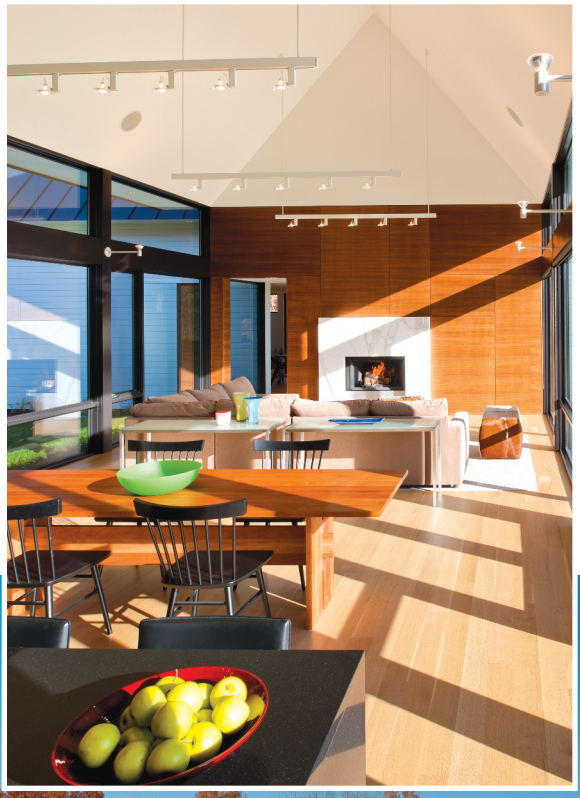
The 4,175-square-foot, four-bedroom Becherer House—designed by **Robert M. Gurney, FAIA,** and located in Albemarle County, Virginia—is about the same size as the Rockport Residence. And it employs the same basic volumetric arrangement—two parallel, gabled pavilions that are slightly offset front to back, connected by a third, perpendicular pavilion enclosing the house's main public living space. In spite of these similarities, however, the Becherer House projects a completely different sensibility.

With spare, clean detailing and a high-contrast white, gray, and black exterior color scheme, the Becherer House reduces the concept of the gabled house to its geometric essentials, creating a structure that sits formally but respectfully on its site, announcing to others, in the manner of a graphic-arts poster, that "this is a modern rural house."

A stone terrace and manicured lawn provide a formal ground plane for the project, as well as a transition from the house's disciplined geometry to the site's rolling pastures and wooded areas. Large expanses of glass, particularly in the central pavilion, admit abundant light throughout the day while providing views of the surrounding countryside. White walls, blond wood flooring, darker wood cabinetry and trim, and other materials create open, airy, and comfortable interior spaces that seem to hover quietly just above the landscape.

The design is a study in how purity of form, line, and color can create a thoroughly modern residence that references rural vernacular architecture. The house fits into its nature-dominated site not by attempting to blend in with it, but by providing a clear but polite counterpoint to it.

The Becherer House was previously covered in the Winter 2014 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.



Main living and dining areas of the Becherer House.

Exterior of the Becherer House.

Photos © Maxwell MacKenzie Architectural Photographer

Skylight at the top of the new stair tower.

The 21st-Century Cabin, with the new entry and stair tower at left.

Photos © Julia Heine/McInturff Architects

Kitchen and living area.

Washingtonian Award

21st-Century Cabin

Highland, MD

McInturff Architects

General Contractor: Timber Ridge Builders

The 21st-Century Cabin, designed by **McInturff Architects,** takes the pure forms of the Becherer House and reduces them further to create a 1,200-square-foot, two-bedroom, gabled residence for an aerospace engineer, a cellist, and their small child. Located in Highland, Maryland, the project renovated and added to a modest gable-roofed house that was not much more than a shack.

The clients asked for a design to support their minimalist lifestyle. Accordingly, the house as renovated employs an open-plan scheme, with only one piece of furniture on the first floor—a small, movable table that the family uses for eating while seated on the floor. Pocket doors on the second floor can be closed off at night to create separate bedrooms. As with the other two projects reviewed here, the interior employs a light-friendly combination of white walls and blond wood flooring with some darker accent materials in the kitchen and the stairway.

The cabin's drab original exterior was changed to a combination of white stucco and black asphalt shingles, creating a contrasting color scheme somewhat like that of the Becherer House, but on a much more compact scale, with only a single gabled volume. The addition encloses a new entry, closets, and a spiral stairway (with a circular skylight on top) that replaces a ladder to the second floor. A bridge links the new stairway to the upper-level room, so that walking from certain first-floor spaces to the loft area can involve crossing the length of the small house twice, increasing the residence's apparent interior volume.

In its rural setting, the new cylindrical volume can be taken as a reference to a grain silo. But with its pure-white stucco exterior, this new part of the house, combined with the original rectangular wing, also brings to mind classic early European modernist houses such as the Villa Savoye, near Paris, designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret.

Small jewels are usually found in mines. But occasionally, as with the 21st-Century Cabin, they can be found in open fields.

This project was previously covered in the Summer 2017 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.

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Three Houses in Suburban Settings

by Ronald O'Rourke

The renovated house known as Four Pavilions.

Photo © Nikolas Koenig Photography, LLC

Living room, with the library visible in the left background.

Renovated kitchen.

Photos © Nikolas Koenig Photography, LLC

Along with the rural houses and urban row houses covered elsewhere in this issue, the juries this year honored three freestanding houses in suburban settings. Although quite different from one another, the three houses are linked in a generational manner: One of them is an important modernist house in the District originally designed by Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA, while the other two are new houses designed by one of Jacobsen's protégés.

Washingtonian Preservation Award

Four Pavilions

Washington, DC

Richard Williams Architects, PLLC

Interior Designers: Jim Luigs Designs
Landscape Architects: Gregg Bleam Landscape Architect PLLC
Structural Engineers: Linton Engineering, LLC
General Contractor: Mauck, Zantzinger and Associates

Widely regarded as the dean of Washington-area modernist architects, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA, is best known for his modular pavilion residences, which combine simple, gabled "Monopoly house" volumes in various configurations. Although he has designed many such houses over the years, the only example in the District itself is Four Pavilions, also known as the Dreier-Barton House, a 1,990-square foot, one-bedroom house with an additional study/guest room.

The house is located on University Terrace, NW, in Washington's Kent area, a suburban neighborhood situated between the Palisades and Foxhall. Completed in 1977, it was recognized as a Record House by *Architectural Record* magazine in 1978, and is featured in the *AIA Guide to the Architecture of Washington, DC.*

In spite of its architectural significance, the house fell into disrepair over the years and was at risk of being demolished when it was sold in 2010 to new owners who instead wanted to preserve and renovate it. They hired **Richard Williams Architects** (RWA) to oversee the project. Working with firm principal **Richard Williams, FAIA**, was project architect **Timothy Abrams, AIA**.

The house's four pavilions are linked at their corners, creating a staggered, linear plan that fits the site and opens up views to the wooded surroundings. "The simple, gabled sheds, stitched together at the corners, create spatial overlaps in plan and section that make a compact plan seem spacious and dynamic," Williams said.

Preserving and updating the work of an architectural master like Jacobsen always poses a delicate design challenge. In this case, however, that challenge was especially personal, as Williams had admired the house since before he even knew that he wanted to become an architect.

RWA's design for the renovation replaced the house's HVAC and electrical systems, upgraded its triangular windows with high-efficiency glass, installed new insulation and flashing, and added a rainscreen—a layered exterior cladding system that can reduce the penetration of moisture and heat. The project also involved some redesign of the master bathroom on the house's eastern side, and in the kitchen and adjoining study/guest room at its western end.

"Internal design changes focused on a new layout for the kitchen, laundry, and guest bath that opened up an axial connection between the two western pavilions, and better integration of the house to the landscape," Williams said. "A new glass door with a sliding shutter at the eastern pavilion replaces one of two distinctive oriel windows, enabling one to walk gracefully from the master suite to a new garden terrace created by raising the grade with a cast-in-place concrete retaining wall." The driveway to the house was also shortened and reconfigured to provide more space for the garden.

"The house was rebuilt substantially," Williams said, "yet the intent of the details, the form of the massing, and the genius of the plan were honored as historic preservation of a modern masterwork."

Merit Award in Architecture

bm Modular One

Bethesda, MD

Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, Architect

Interior Designer: Baron Gurney Interiors
Landscape Architects: Campion Hruby Landscape Architects
Structural Engineers: D. Anthony Beale LLC
Pre-Fab Contractor: Nationwide Homes
General Contractor: Sandy Spring Builders

While the Four Pavilions house is an example of modularity in architectural form, the bm Modular One house in Bethesda, Maryland, is an example of truly modular construction. Designed by **Robert M. Gurney, FAIA,** a protégé of Hugh Newell Jacobsen, with firm member **Kara R. McHone** as the project architect, the house was constructed by a builder/developer who had substantial experience building modular houses designed in the Craftsman and colonial styles, but who sought a modular design for a modern, airy residence desired by time- and budget-constrained clients.

The 4,760-square-foot, three-bedroom house consists of 13 modules that were built in two weeks at a plant in southern Virginia, then shipped to the site on flatbed trucks and assembled on site within two days.

"The energy-efficient shells arrived on site with windows, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC ducting in place," said Gurney. "The interiors were dry-walled, primed, and ready for finishes. The foundation and basement were constructed on site with polished concrete floors while the modules were being fabricated."

The modules are designed to accept a variety of exterior and interior finishes. For these clients, external materials included corrugated metal siding, stucco, and Spanish cedar, while interior materials included maple flooring, walnut millwork, and an aluminum stairway. The result is a residence that is difficult to distinguish, both inside and out, from the many beautiful (and award-winning) conventionally built houses that Gurney has designed for other clients.

"Both modern and filled with light, the house employs all of the intended benefits of modular building without compromising proportion, light, scale, and texture," Gurney said. Future clients could combine the modules in different configurations and choose other finishes to produce houses meeting their own space needs, material preferences, and budgets.

Pre-fab houses have been gaining some traction in the market in recent years, but modular systems like Gurney's could help accelerate that trend. And perhaps not a moment too soon: Productivity gains in the construction industry have lagged far behind gains in other industries. In the United States, according to one study by the McKinsey Global Institute, the constant-dollar value-added per hour worked in the construction industry has actually dropped by half since the 1960s. Modular systems like Gurney's could help reverse that trend, making housing more affordable for people of all income levels.

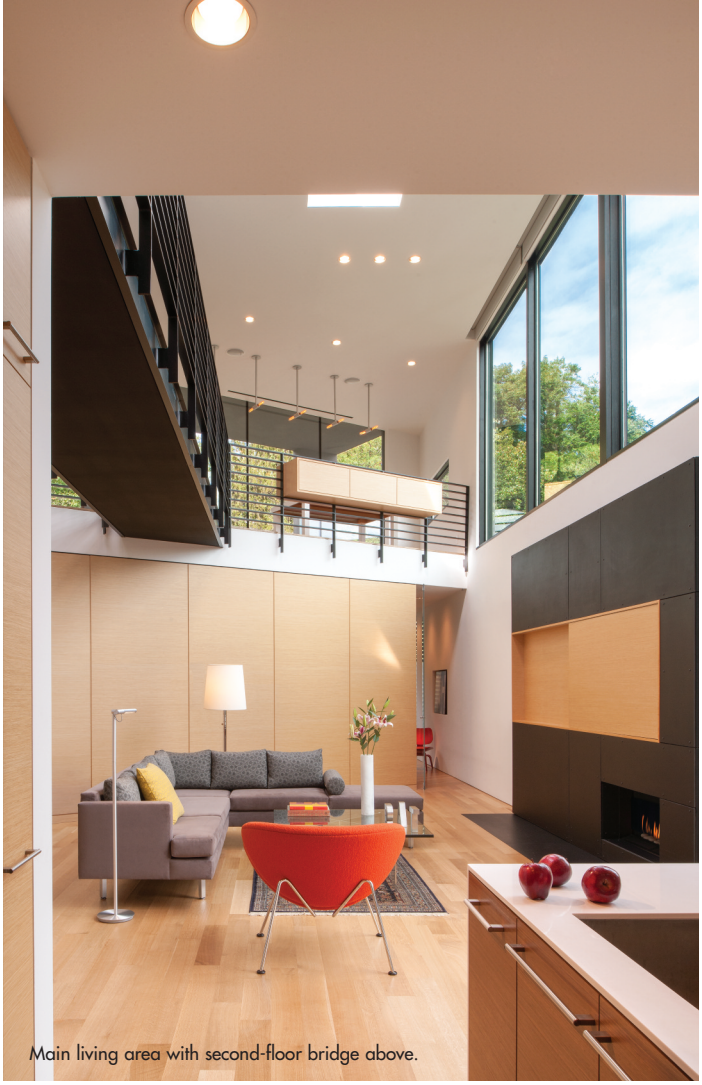
The bm Modular One house was previously covered in the Summer 2014 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.

Living room.

Exterior of bm Modular One.

Photos © Maxwell MacKenzie Architectural Photographer

The prow of the Komai residence.



Main living area with second-floor bridge above.

Photos © Maxwell MacKenzie Architectural Photographer

Merit Award in Architecture

Komai

Alexandria, VA

Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, Architect

Structural Engineers: D. Anthony Beale LLC
General Contractor: Commonwealth Building and Design

The 2,795-square-foot, two-bedroom Komai house, located in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia, was also designed by **Robert M. Gurney, FAIA,** with **Kara R. McHone** as the project architect. The triangular residence is fitted snugly onto a previously vacant triangular site that had been considered unbuildable due to its odd shape and small size combined with the neighborhood's height limit and setback requirements. The house was built for a pair of graphic designers who looked past these limitations and saw an opportunity.

The first floor includes the entry, kitchen, a centrally located double-height living/dining room, and the master suite. The second floor houses a guest bedroom suite and an office/workspace that are linked by a bridge crossing over the living/dining room. Three skylights pour sunlight down into the center of the house.

"The zoning setbacks largely informed the [design's] volume and massing," Gurney said. "The house is built to the setbacks on facing streets, aligning with adjacent houses along the lengths of both blocks. Even though it's two stories [tall] and built to the maximum height limit, the house is consistent with the average height of the thirteen houses within the block."

The house's entry area, located at the narrow tip of the triangle, is sheathed in wood slats that reappear at other points along the exterior, which is otherwise characterized by gray stucco and Mondrian-like window arrangements. The interior combines white walls, blond wood floors, wood cabinetry, Kalwall translucent panels, and dark-painted steel elements to create a crisp but comfortable inside atmosphere.

The dark fireplace wall and bridge are major points of focus, with the latter providing some definition in the double-height space between the living and dining zones. The continuity of materials that runs through the house, combined with the plan's disciplined geometry inside its triangular shell, produces a residence that is simultaneously orderly and dynamic.

The Komai house was previously covered in the Summer 2014 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.

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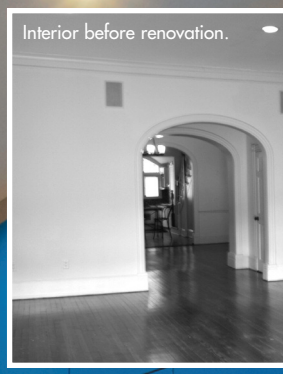
View from the kitchen toward the dining area of the Kalorama Row House.

Living area.

Photo © Daniel Afzal



Interior before renovation.

Side by Side

Three Row Houses in the District

by Ronald O'Rourke

Hemmed in by party walls that are often rather close to one another, Washington's row houses are frequently long and narrow residences that can pose architectural challenges in terms of arranging rooms and bringing natural light to deep interior spaces. Solutions to these common conditions can vary greatly in their details, and that's the case with the three award-winning row house projects reviewed here. Two of them are renovations, while the third is a new house. Although they employ different approaches to meet their clients' needs and preferences, the result in each case is a modern in-town residence that evokes memories of another time or place.

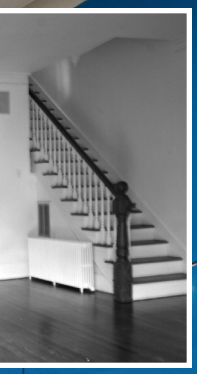
Washingtonian Award

Kalorama Row House

Washington, DC

Carter + Burton Architecture PLC

Landscape Architects: OCULUS
Structural Engineers: Core Structure Inc.
Millwork: Charles H. Snead Co.
Beeswax Artist: Richard Lew
General Contractor: General Repair Services Inc.



Courtesy of Carter + Burton Architecture

Photo © Daniel Afzal

Dining area.

Photo © Daniel Afzal

The Kalorama Row House project, designed by **Carter + Burton Architecture** (CBA), substantially renovated the interior of a large row house in Washington's prestigious Kalorama neighborhood. The renovation transformed a dark and aged structure with tilted floors and failing stairs into a four-level, three-bedroom residence with an additional basement-level apartment and generous indoor and outdoor spaces for large gatherings. The house's original front façade, executed handsomely in rusticated gray stone, remains in place.

The renovation was guided by the concept of a palimpsest—a document on which traces of older writing are visible under a top layer of more recently added text. Implementing this concept, CBA's design for the renovation preserved elements of the house's shell while inserting new finishes, creating renovated spaces in which new and old elements play off one another, supporting a modern lifestyle while reminding occupants of the house's earlier years.

"Existing plaster walls were preserved and featured on all levels," CBA said. On top of that base layer, "special acoustic wood detailing and beeswax walls on new insertions help reflect light and define spaces."

The dramatically wood-sheathed dining room in the middle of the first floor provides guests with an early indication of the house's newly added materials. Warm wood elements there and elsewhere are complemented by blue cabinetry in the kitchen and a second-floor bathroom and laundry, and by biomorphically patterned blue walls in a third-floor bathroom.

Even in a large row house, storage space can be at a premium. Accordingly, CBA said, "the project also features many hidden built-ins and compartments throughout, using a ship-like mentality to access every square inch for functionality."

CBA "has been at the forefront of the sustainable design movement since the firm was founded in 1992," the firm says, adding that "energy efficiency, air quality, eco-friendly building materials, and controlled natural light combined with thoughtful design are the cornerstones to our approach."

Reflecting this focus, the house as renovated gathers natural light not only from its south-facing front façade and its rear façade (where a newly added wrap-around window wall on the first floor sends soft northern light into the kitchen and dining room), but also from a gangway that runs along one side of the house and from a rooftop light monitor. Large, frameless, pivot-wall doors and a double-wide barn door help daylight pass between interior spaces. Sustainable design features include reclaimed wood flooring, foam insulation, an energy recovery ventilator in the HVAC system, steel windows with thermal breaks to reduce heat gain and loss, a living roof, and solar panels.

The Kalorama Row House project takes the idea of a palimpsest and runs with it to create a residence that presents a rich combination of layers that are not just old and new, but also textured and smooth, and neutral-toned and brightly colored.

Interior before renovation.

Courtesy of KUBE Architecture

Staircase with screen.

Photo © Paul Burk Photography

Kitchen of Mi Casita.

Photo © Paul Burk Photography

Washingtonian Award

Mi Casita

Washington, DC

KUBE Architecture

Steel Fabricators: Metal Specialties
General Contractor: Metrix Construction

While the Kalorama Row House project preserves reminders of that residence's own history, the project known as Mi Casita is designed to evoke memories of another place—Puerto Rico, where the client grew up.

Spanish for "My Little House" or "My Cottage," Mi Casita is a two-story row house near Lincoln Park in Washington's Capitol Hill neighborhood. The owner asked **KUBE Architecture** to design an interior renovation that would be reminiscent of her island home. The design for the project, developed by **Richard Loosle,** a firm principal, removed interior walls, installed generous rear windows and an enlarged skylight to bring in more daylight, and inserted an economical package of new interior design elements with clean lines and bright colors that are traditional to Puerto Rico.

Light-colored surfaces on the lower level convert the space into a white box that maximizes available light and acts as a backdrop for the newly inserted design elements. A wooden screen in front of the open-riser stair, called a *mampara,* helps to define the living area without completely closing it off from the open volume of the stairwell.

Although intended to evoke memories of Puerto Rico, the newly inserted elements, with their black linear elements and colored volumes against a white background, are also reminiscent of the Dutch De *Stijl* movement, whose founding 100 years ago is being celebrated this year in The Netherlands and elsewhere.

Mi Casita was previously covered in the Winter 2015 issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC*. Following the hurricanes that devastated Puerto Rico this past summer, the memories evoked by the design might now be more bittersweet—but perhaps for the same reason, also more highly treasured. As Puerto Rico recovers from that disaster, hopefully sooner rather than later, the context for those memories may again be modified.

Merit Award in Architecture

Ontario Residence

Washington, DC

David Jameson Architect

General Contractor: PureForm Builders

The 4,600-square-foot Ontario Residence, a new row house located on Ontario Place, NW, in Washington's Adams Morgan neighborhood, was designed by **David Jameson, FAIA,** with **Patrick McGowan** as associate architect. Consisting of a main residence on four levels with a basement-level apartment, the Ontario Residence isn't just a modern house—it's an intellectually subversive one.

For one thing, the house is an infill project that paradoxically doesn't appear to fill in very much of its site. The project occupies a former 14-foot-wide gap between two groups of historic row houses—a space that had long been used as a community garden plot. But instead of placing the new residence's front façade in line with those of its neighbors, as traditional practice would suggest, Jameson's design pushes the house to the rear of the site, preserving an open front area that can be viewed as a respectful memory of the former garden plot. A wire-mesh screen across the front of the site, meanwhile, symbolically maintains the building line along the block, and in time can support a vertical garden, strengthening the reference to the garden plot.

In a second subversive gesture, the wooden part of the house's front façade, clad in burned cypress siding, shifts abruptly from one side of the property to the other, creating an enigmatically sculptural form that departs radically from traditional row house façade arrangements. As it rises up from the ground level, the vaguely serpentine volume appears to struggle against the limits imposed by the property's two party walls, which are veiled in the plot's open front area behind smooth gray metal cladding. Large window walls on the first floor and basement levels heighten the tension in the façade design by making the wood-clad form seem top heavy—the upper floors of the house as a whole are more massive and solid-looking than the lower levels supporting them.

Inside the house, the centrally located main stairway provides a third surprising element. Viewed from the side, the stairway has a commandingly monolithic presence that is in proportion with the snake-like form on the front façade. In between the stairway's solid sidewalls, however, are perforated-metal treads and risers that appear to dematerialize the structure for those moving from floor to floor while allowing more light from above to pass down through the house.

White walls, dark wood flooring, and minimalist detailing complete an interior design that is pristine and monumental without being overwhelming. The Ontario Residence is a study in how a radically different design for a row house can nevertheless be respectful of traditional adjoining houses and neighborhood memories of how the site had previously been used.

The project was previously covered in the Winter 2016 issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC*.

Front façade of the Ontario Residence. **Photos © Paul Warchol**

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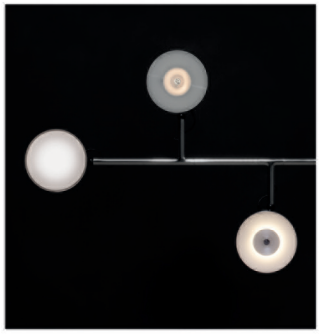

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Naylor Court Play House, with the enclosed link to the main house visible at upper right.

Alley Up

Two Small Projects Make the Most of Urban Sites

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP

The Washingtonian jury awarded two small-scale projects notable for their alley sites. They are "good examples of what happens when our cities fill up," said juror Jason Forney, AIA, LEED AP. "We must use every available space."

Washington, DC, has a unique and somewhat tortured history regarding alley buildings. The L'Enfant Plan has variously-sized city blocks, some of which worked better for standard 19th-century development than others. The larger blocks, once ringed with street-facing buildings, had substantial unused interior land areas. Some were developed as stables or carriage houses; others were developed as tiny row house dwellings, often lacking indoor plumbing.

Alley communities formed, many of them overcrowded and substandard. Long before the infamous postwar urban renewal period, the Alley Dwellings Authority demolished hundreds of

Photo © Paul Burk Photography

Lower level of the play house.

Photo © Paul Burk Photography

alley buildings in the city, forcing a diaspora of poor, primarily African-American residents. Subsequent zoning and other laws clamped down on alley buildings in general and dwellings in particular. This was especially true of buildings accessible only by alley, but it was also the case for carriage houses located in the rear yards of street-facing row houses.

In recent years, with the resurgence of interest in urban neighborhoods (as well as advances in firefighting and sanitation), the city has relaxed standards somewhat, creating a modest boom in alley redevelopment. This is seen most clearly in Blagden Alley—now packed with trendy restaurants and galleries—but also, incrementally, elsewhere.

Washingtonian Small Projects Award

Naylor Court Play House

Washington, DC

EL Studio PLLC

Structural Engineers: Linton Engineering

In 2011, in Naylor Court, which is the name for several wide alleys within the block bounded by 9th, 10th, N, and O streets, NW, a young couple converted a former stable into a live-work unit, with a design studio at the street (alley) level, a one-bedroom-plus-den apartment above, and a generous walled rear garden area. Within a few years, children came, and with them the need to expand into a "live-work-PLAY" program, as the architects from **EL Studio PLLC** put it in their competition entry.

A two-story pavilion was added in the rear corner of the garden, connected to the existing apartment via a glassed-in corridor/bridge, open at grade to preserve garden space. The lower level has a playroom that converts to a guest room and flows freely into the yard. The upper level has a children's bedroom and bathroom, with a mezzanine loft space above tucked under the sloping roof.

The white color of the structure keeps the garden bright, and the contrast with the dark red brick that dominates the area appropriately marks the pavilion as new. The roof is sloped to maintain sun exposure to the full rear wall of the pre-existing building. The garden, say the architects, has become a "secret courtyard," a center of family life that is remarkably private considering the dense urban setting.

Juror Forney noted that it was an "unconventional choice to pull the addition away from the house, but very successful." Juror Paul Masi, AIA, noted that the pulled-away "Play" pavilion "creates a spectacular view from the main house," where previously there was just the two-story brick wall of a neighboring structure.

Adding to the praise, juror Natalye Appel, FAIA, LEED AP, noted, "The creation of an outdoor 'room' seems so right. [Compositionally,] the negative is as important as the positive."

The project's materiality was also noted, especially the peek-a-boo character of the pre-existing brick side wall, which is partly indoors and partly outdoors. Also, the architects took care to specify clapboard the same width as a brick course, to relate the scale of the new white building to its surroundings.

The interiors feature what might be called practical minimalism—a clear preference for simplicity and un-fussiness, making the most of architectural elements (doors, windows, skylights) and tempered in a pleasant and pragmatic way to the realities of family living.

Alley Armor as seen from the alley.

The terrace dubbed Alley Armor.

Photos © Paul Burk Photography

Washingtonian Small Projects Award

Alley Armor

Washington, DC

KUBE Architecture

Steel Fabricator: Metal Specialties
General Contractor: Milloy Carpentry

In some cases where alley buildings survived the purges of the middle 20th century, subsequent owners added decks on top. These provide outdoor living space in tight urban quarters, but often suffer from limited or awkward access. Such was the case for a garage behind a Dupont Circle row house, which was capped with a deck that was almost unusable. No aesthetic effort and little consideration of circumstance, it seemed, had gone into its creation. Enclosing fences, although tall, didn't deal effectively with privacy or sun control issues, but cut off air circulation. Moreover, having been built of non-resilient materials, it was falling apart.

KUBE Architecture PC was hired to craft an enclosure—which came to be called "Alley Armor"—in response to the particular challenges of the location. Most prominently, immediately across the alley is a six-story apartment building, with lots of windows overlooking the deck. Privacy from the sides also needed to be addressed, as well as sun control and air circulation to maintain thermal comfort. Accordingly, on the alley side, slats provide visual privacy but allow air flow and a little filtered light. Part of the deck is roofed for sun control and visual privacy from the higher floors of the apartment building. On the sides, metal mesh panels provide a degree of privacy, while allowing air circulation. The structure is solid and resilient—primarily steel, with some wood infill elements for warmth and a softer touch.

For a relatively small project, there is a "robust palette of materials," noted juror Appel. Indeed, the assembly includes several types of structural, self-weathering, and stainless steel; rot-resistant ipe wood; and metal mesh, all atop the pre-existing red brick garage. These are carefully—not decoratively, KUBE emphasizes—deployed as "armor" against the surroundings, blocking views in, framing views out, providing enough-but-not-too-much sun or air movement.

Curiously, for the armor metaphor and for the architects' insistence that a strict functionality guided the design process, from without, the deck enclosure comes off as a kind of architectural parrot amid the pigeons, a charismatic and eye-catching departure from the utilitarian norm of the alley. "It will blend in over time," predicted juror Masi, but for now, it is a focal element in all the right ways.

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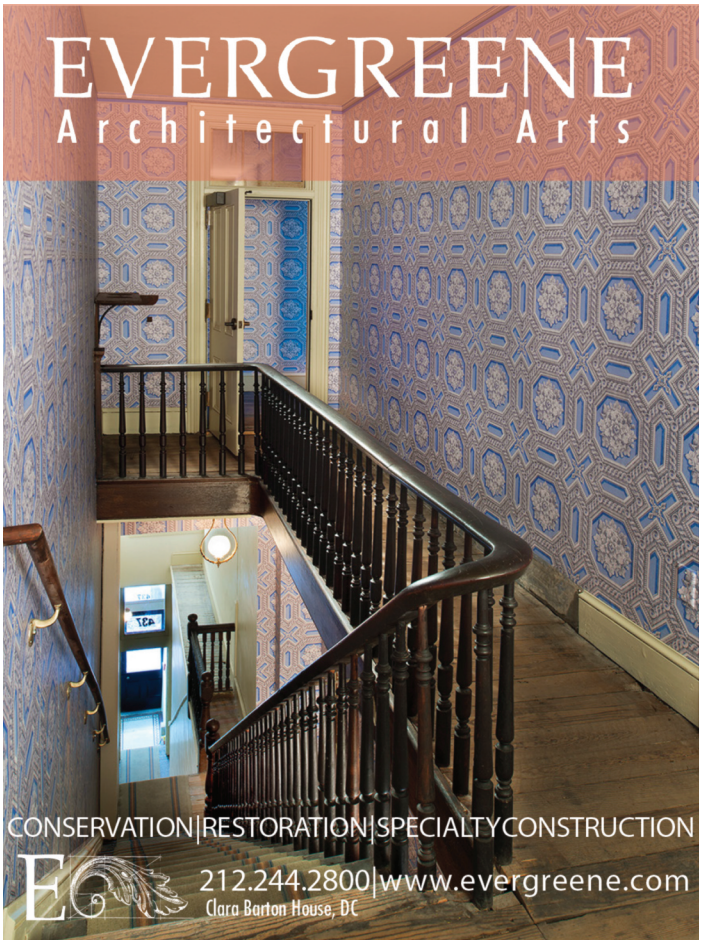

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Close-up of the Wood Cloud installation.

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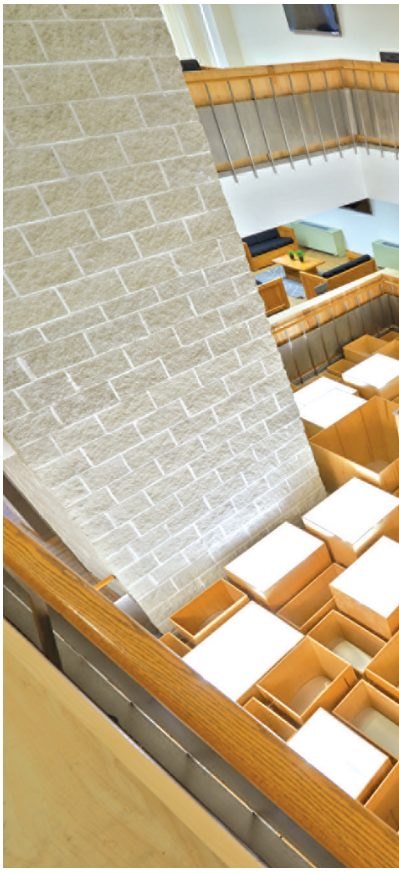

Wood Cloud viewed from above.

Wood Cloud

Temporary Partition Reflects DeafSpace Principles

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP

Citation for Temporary Installation/Presidential Citation for Universal Design

Wood Cloud

Washington, DC

Studio Twenty Seven Architecture

Structural Engineers: Robert Silman Associates
MEP Engineers: Interface Engineering
Project Managers: Savills Studley
General Contractor: James G. Davis Construction Corporation

Gallaudet University is famous as the premier institution of higher learning for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Less known is that within its campus is a high school, the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD), which occupies a dedicated sub-campus to the northeast of the principal university buildings. Drawing students from across the US and American territories, MSSD is primarily a boarding school, and accordingly, residence halls are a necessity.

In 2014, MSSD administrators decided to replace an aging dormitory. Ballard North House, a four-story Gallaudet University dorm, was available for interim use during the construction of the new facility. It largely fit the requirements, but with one glaring exception: MSSD's students, as adolescents, require gender separation, whereas Ballard North House has a unifying full-height atrium space. (Ballard was designed in 1960, when atria were starting to appear in institutional buildings. In this case, however, the visual connections provided by the atrium were considered an aid to deaf residents—an early example of a design approach that has come to be codified as "DeafSpace.") For MSSD's temporary use, visual connections between the boys and girls had to be eliminated.

The solution was to provide a mostly horizontal barrier in the middle of the atrium space, creating, in effect, two stacked atria. Boys would occupy the first and second floors and lower atrium, while girls would have the upper floors and atrium. The division was necessarily incomplete—the building has only one elevator, for example, and an open stair runs through the atrium—but for interim use, sufficient.

"This could have been a real throwaway," commented juror Coren Sharples, AIA. "It didn't have to be something nice." Indeed, for purely functional purposes, a simple plywood, acoustic tile, or even fabric barrier could have sufficed. But MSSD and Gallaudet, given their unique missions, view good design not just as a nicety, but as a necessity. They needed and wanted a solution that would go beyond mere functionality.

Studio Twenty Seven Architecture conceived the project in art-world terms, as a "commissioned temporary installation." The

architects were inspired by a type of cloud formation comprising a cluster of variously sized smaller clouds pressed together yet maintaining their distinct forms (*altocumulus floccus*)—a formation that appear solid but still lets sunlight through. This struck them as the correct design direction for Ballard North House, and accordingly they named the project "Wood Cloud."

In the translation to a rectilinear mid-20th-century modern building, the "clouds" became a cluster of birch plywood boxes of varying sizes. They appear similar from below and above. Each has a translucent diffuser that blocks visual connections. Many also have LED light strips, providing an upward and downward glow. This additional lighting was needed, as the atrium was a somewhat dark, entirely internalized space, without any skylights or glazed walls. Relatively bright lighting is also a cornerstone of DeafSpace design, given users' need to see things clearly.

Matching plywood was used for the stair enclosure and for computer desks in the form of counters lining the sides of the atrium. The stair, with its diagonal thrust and larger surfaces, was the most challenging part of the installation, but the attractive and unified material treatment helps it blend in.

The pre-existing dorm's spatial massing consists of rectilinear areas (the atrium and the study/lounge mezzanines) that abut in somewhat irregular ways. Materials are generally utilitarian in character, with acoustic tile ceilings and painted drywall walls. Features include a full-height rustic-faced concrete block wall in the atrium and classic metal mid-century railings, including wood caps. Wood Cloud incorporates the warmest and most dynamic strands of this design DNA, transforming a rather dull space into an exciting one, even if only temporarily.

The lower level of the divided atrium, with Wood Cloud above.

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Heavenly Stairways

Two Projects Called Out for Divine Details

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP

"Everybody knows that architects *love* stairs," commented Washingtonian Awards juror Jason Forney, AIA, LEED AP, introducing that jury's two "Details" awards. Officially speaking, there was no such category in the competition program, but the jurors were given the discretion to recognize specific elements of projects from any category as they saw fit. This time around there were two awards, both to stairways.

Washingtonian Detail Award

Mathewson Residence Staircase

Washington, DC

Shinberg.Levinas Architects

Structural Engineers: Shemro Engineering
Mechanical Engineers: AJS Consulting Engineers P.C.
Electrical Engineers: Welborn Engineering
General Contractors: Added Dimensions

Side view of the staircase in the Mathewson Residence.

Photo © Alan Karchmer Architectural Photographer

Exterior view of the house, with the staircase visible within.

Staircase as seen from the lower level.

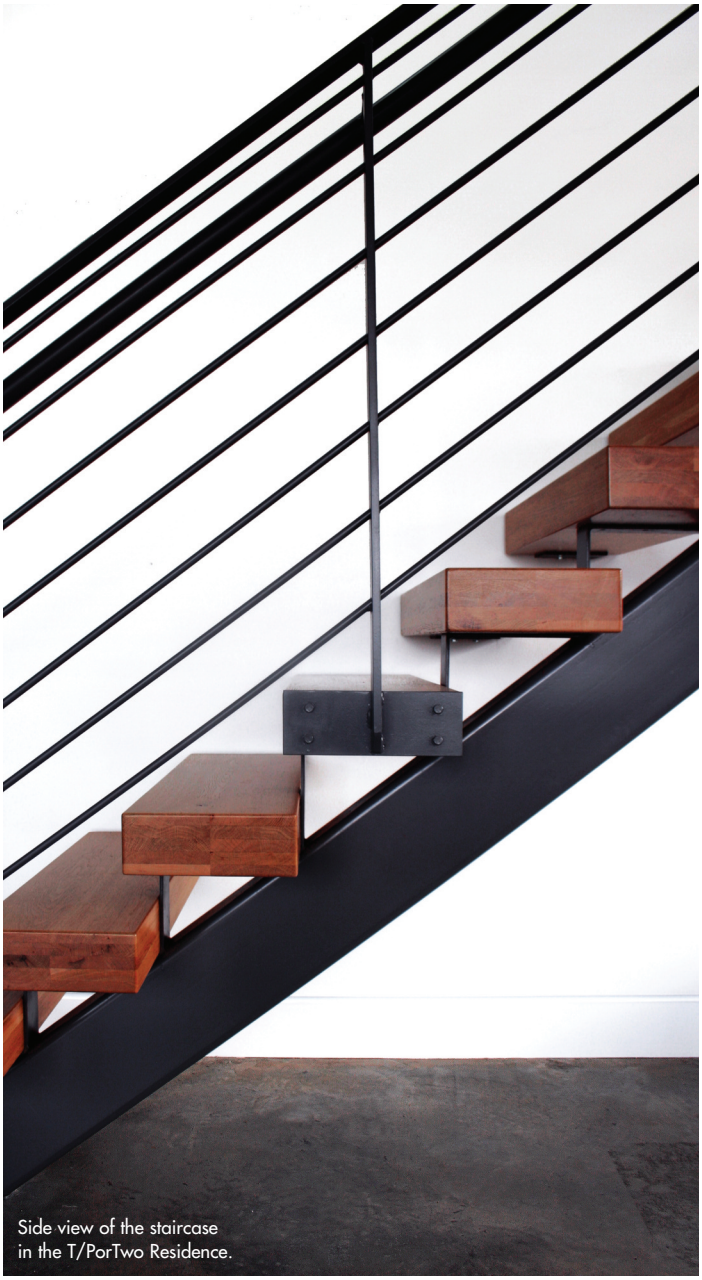
Photos © Alan Karchmer Architectural Photographer

At the Mathewson House, by **Shinberg.Levinas Architects,** the stair was cited for its sculptural quality combined with structural integrity. The house occupies a lot that slopes steeply up from the street. The upper level was the logical location for the main living spaces because of its treetop views. But since the entrance needed to be on the lower level, a gracious connector between the two floors was in order.

The geometry of the house, derived from site topography and views, is based on diagonal lines merging into curves. This motif is expressed, in various ways, in the overall stairway form, the bottoms of the individual treads, and the pattern of the guardrail pickets. Meanwhile, the house is designed with a stone-clad base carved into the hillside and white floating volumes on top—the intention being to create a feeling of lightness emerging from solid anchorage. In a similar spirit, the treads of the staircase are anchored into the side wall (which, in fact, is sheathed in stone on the exterior) and then taper horizontally into airiness.

Each step is a single carved piece of wood, with matching wood nosings. The handrail, of thin black steel with wood cap, meets safety code requirements while remaining visually light and restating the geometric leitmotif. The baluster closest to each tread's nosing extends through the tread and turns, running under the tread. This detail not only fulfills the code requirement barring riser openings greater than four inches, but also lends an aesthetic grace note.

Detail view of the connections of the stair treads to the side wall.



Side view of the staircase in the T/PorTwo Residence.

Photos © Wiebenson & Dorman Architects PC/JT Roy

Washingtonian Detail Award

T/PorTwo Residence Staircase

Washington, VA

Wiebenson & Dorman Architects PC

Structural Engineers: JGK Structural Engineers
Interior Designers: Carey Reid Kirk Inc.
General Contractors: Hampton & Massie Construction

"This one," said juror Natalye Appel, FAIA, LEED AP, "uses simple, almost off-the-shelf elements, but is detailed so elegantly."

For a weekend house in Rappahannock County, Virginia, **Wiebenson & Dorman Architects** PC looked to vernacular buildings for inspiration: barns, lookout towers, and old farmhouses and slave quarters. The stair's material vocabulary is drawn from these

Staircase and kitchen
in the T/PorTwo Residence.

Photo © Wiebenson & Dorman Architects PC/JT Roy

same sources—the thick wood treads recall the wood studs of older buildings (larger and more roughly hewn than modern dimensional lumber such as the 2x4), while the black steel structure and connectors speak directly to the work of rural blacksmiths.

In contrast, the basic configuration of the stair—single stringer with treads cantilevered to either side, with metal railings following the diagonal of the stair—pulls from mid-20th-century Modernism. In a subtle diversion from the mid-century standard, however, the architects included a steel cover plate at the exposed ends of treads where there are guardrail posts. On the wall side of the stair, the treads are held back from the wall by black steel angles, providing structural stability and a bit of aesthetic interest visible mostly when one actually uses the stairs. The thickness of the treads also deals with the safety code restrictions on open risers (less than four inches remains open).

The marvel of this stair is the combination of historic materiality and modern form, a sort of mash-up creating something new and beautiful in its own right. The jurors noted that the stair "almost seems obvious in its simplicity and elegance," but that they couldn't recall seeing a stair quite like it previously.

Unrelated to the stairway, this competition entry was noted for having one of the most dramatic "before" shots: a photo of a house engulfed in flames. The owners, having determined that razing the pre-existing house and building new was the only viable option, donated it to the Sperryville Volunteer Fire Department. It was burned to the ground, eliminating landfill waste while providing live training for the firemen and unique entertainment for the owners, friends, and neighbors. It seems that, if architects love stairs, everyone loves a good fire—at least one that's controlled and for a good cause!

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Special Mentions

Chapter President Cites Six Projects for Distinction

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

Each year, the current AIA | DC chapter president has the opportunity to recognize projects in several specialized categories, including Sustainable Design, Design & Wellbeing, Universal Design, and Urban Catalyst. This year, President Carolyn Sponza, AIA, selected six projects for citations. Five of them are profiled below; the sixth—Wood Cloud, by Studio Twenty Seven Architecture, which was recognized for Universal Design—also won a Chapter Award and is featured in a separate article.

Presidential Citation for Sustainable Design

Discovery Elementary School

Arlington, VA

VMDO Associates

Landscape Architects: OCULUS Landscape Architecture
Structural Engineers: Fox & Associates, Inc.
MEP Engineers (mechanical, lighting, net-zero energy design): CMTA Consulting Engineers
MEP Engineers (power, plumbing, fire protection): 2rw Consultants, Inc.
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Construction Managers: HEERY
General Contractor: SIGAL Construction Corporation

Arlington's Discovery Elementary School, designed by **VMDO Associates,** is the first zero-energy school built in the Washington area, and the largest to date anywhere in the country. Encompassing some 98,000 square feet, the school can accommodate up to 650 students in grades pre-K through 5. The architects estimate that the building's design will save the Arlington school system roughly $100,000 per year based on current utility costs.

That achievement required the design team to balance energy conservation measures with carbon-neutral energy production techniques. To reduce consumption, for instance, highly efficient LED lighting is used throughout the building, while insulated concrete walls serve to mitigate heat gain and loss. On the production side, the project incorporates geothermal wells along with an impressive array of 1,706 solar panels, spanning almost the entirety of the school's roof. The plan and massing of the building were carefully manipulated not only to maximize energy efficiency, but also to reduce the large structure's apparent bulk within its predominantly residential neighborhood. In a similar vein, a large roof canopy running the length of the building provides additional space for photovoltaic panels while creating a "front porch" that shelters outdoor activities.

The project is also notable for the ways in which it actively engages students and teachers with the architecture. Interior spaces are widely varied in form, color, and materials, and zoned so as to reflect the expanding curricula and changing learning styles of students as they move up through the school's grades. The building's sustainable features are a key component of this strategy, as well, serving as hooks to encourage children to learn about subjects such as water conservation, air quality, and even astronomy.

Photo © Alan Karchmer Architectural Photographer

Dining Commons.

Portico and outdoor play area of the Discovery Elementary School.

Photo © Lincoln Barbour

Presidential Citation for Design & Wellbeing

Children's Hospital of Richmond Pavilion

Richmond, VA

HKS, Inc.

Landscape Architects: Mahan Rykiel Associates
Structural Engineers: Dunbar, Milby, Williams, Pittman & Vaughan
MEP Engineers: ccrd
General Contractor: Skanska

With its inviting street-level colonnade, elegant glass curtain wall, and lushly planted rooftop terrace, the sleek modern building directly across the street from Richmond's historic City Hall—and on axis with the State Capitol beyond—could easily be mistaken for a luxury hotel or high-end corporate office building. In fact, it is a new comprehensive children's medical facility born out of the consolidation of several outdated pediatric clinics. It has also proved to be an instant landmark, bringing a welcome jolt of architectural energy to the rather nondescript campus of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System.

"The vision for the Children's Pavilion is to create an oasis for sick and injured children," stated the architects at **HKS, Inc.** Their strategy for achieving that began at the conceptual level. The form of the building, which consists of an inset ground floor, a boxy, three-story garage podium, the "Sky Garden" terrace, and finally a gently faceted glass tower, drew inspiration from the natural geography of the region. The ground floor, with its open loggia, represents the path through the forest, which is abstractly expressed in the vertically striated façades of the garage podium. The Sky Garden level, which also contains the main hospital lobby and registration, is intended to evoke the upper canopy of trees in the forest. The blue-tinged, glassy upper levels, appropriately enough, are associated with water and the sky.

Exterior of the Children's Hospital Richmond Pavilion.

The architects employed other design strategies aimed at producing a calm healing environment, ranging from the tried-and-true to the extraordinary. In the former category are bright, cheerful colors on walls and furniture and abundant windows to admit natural light. More unusual are the interactive digital displays that add a sense of liveliness and playfulness and, not incidentally, help to distract young patients from their ailments. The three-story atrium at the southeast corner of the building is precisely the sort of exhilarating interior urban space that, were it not part of a hospital, would likely be filled with laptop-toting, coffee-sipping patrons seeking a pleasant place to while away the hours. As it is, the atrium is a welcome amenity that surely goes a long way toward comforting sick children and their loved ones.

Sky Garden terrace of the Children's Hospital Richmond Pavilion.

Photos © Garrett Rowland

Presidential Citation for Urban Catalyst

7th & Pennsylvania, SE

Washington, DC

Weinstein Studio

Architect of Record (schematic design phase): Nelson Architects
Structural Engineers: Ehlert/Bryan, Inc.
MEP Engineers: Encon Group Inc.
Lighting Consultants: MCLA
Specifications Consultants: Heller & Metzger PC
Building Envelope Consultant: Davidson & Associates
General Contractor: American Property Company

Over the course of three decades, architect **Amy Weinstein, FAIA,** working with the same owner and contractor, has been gradually remaking the corner of 7th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, a significant commercial hub in the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

The effort began modestly with the renovation of a one-story, Art Moderne former Kresge's store at the northwest corner of the intersection. This was soon followed by a three-story addition above the original building. The result of these first two phases, with a jazzy ornamental band taking the place of the original Kresge's sign and a colorful brick skin on the new upper floors, was striking.

The third phase entailed revamping two neighboring one-story buildings on either side of the original property for new retail tenants. The renovated façade of the Pennsylvania Avenue building whimsically incorporated the distinctive bumpy yellow tiles normally used as safety paving on public pedestrian paths. The 7th Street building, by contrast, was marked by pillars clad in porcelain tiles cut into shapes depicting local flora and fauna.

The fourth and final phase to date involved another vertical addition, this time spanning the entire group of properties, including what had been a narrow alley between two of the buildings. Weinstein extended the façades of the two small neighboring buildings using similar or complementary motifs. The narrow façade infilling the former alley entrance is an accent piece marked by a shimmering sliver of copper with rakishly projecting windows.

This series of projects, which Weinstein has dubbed "incremental urbanism," was recognized with a citation as an Urban Catalyst.

The addition to the former low-rise building along 7th Street, SE, with the copper-clad link, filling in the former alley, at left.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie Architectural Photographer

The 7th Street side building before the renovation and addition.

Courtesy of Amy Weinstein, FAIA

The vertically expanded building facing Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, with the ground floor façade incorporating yellow safety tiles.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie Architectural Photographer

Presidential Citation for Urban Catalyst

Uline Arena

Washington, DC

Antunovich Associates

Structural Engineers: Tadjer-Cohen-Edelson Associates
MEP Engineers: SSA Engineering, LLC
Civil Engineers: Dewberry
Geotechnical Engineers: DMY Associates
Transportation Engineers: Gorove/Slade Associates
Sustainability Consultants: Sustainable Building Partners
General Contractor: James G. Davis Construction Corporation

It's a safe bet that millions of railway passengers traveling into or out of Washington's Union Station have glanced at the curious, barrel-vaulted building at 3rd and M streets, NE, just east of the tracks, and soon looked away, unaware of its significant place in history. It was in that building, then known as the Washington Coliseum, that the Beatles in 1964 gave their first concert in the United States. For a generation (or more) of music fans, the building was virtually hallowed ground.

Completed in 1941 and originally named Uline Arena, after its owner Miguel Uline, it initially served as the home of the Washington Lions hockey team. The building went on to host professional basketball games, boxing matches, and even an inaugural ball for President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Many other famous musicians performed there during the Washington Coliseum days, but eventually the arena fell into disrepair. For decades, it was used ignominiously as a waste transfer facility.

After buying the dilapidated structure in 2013, Douglas Development hired **Antunovich Associates** to convert it into a mixed-use facility, accommodating outdoor retailer REI on the ground floor with offices above. The architects worked to preserve the essential exterior form of the building while adding several floors within what had been a single hangar-like space. At the northeast corner of the site, the façades of what was originally a semi-detached ice house were restored, while new construction within and above the historic walls created additional rentable space. At the juncture between the two main structures, the façade of the arena was pulled inward a bit, leaving the ends of the building's arched concrete ribs exposed, thus creating a pedestrian arcade.

The renovation turned a challenging, awkward, but venerable landmark intro a vibrant commercial venue that may be a harbinger of neighboring redevelopment to come.

Office lobby.

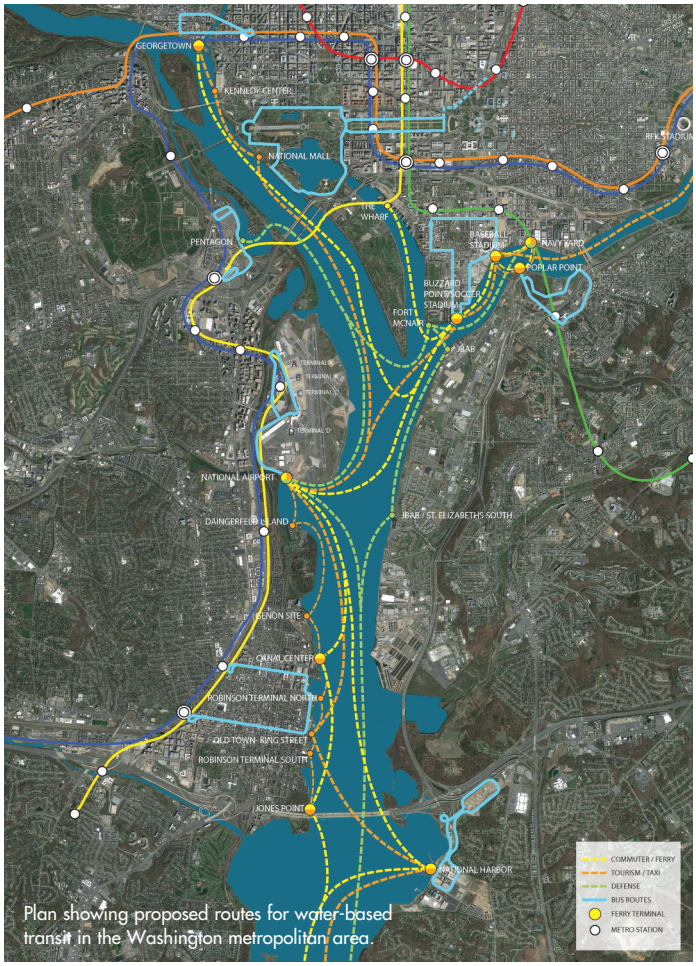
Photo © Antunovich Associates

Renovated Uline Arena as seen from the northwest.

Uline Arena before renovation.

Photo © Antunovich Associates

Photo © Dana Bowden



Plan showing proposed routes for water-based transit in the Washington metropolitan area.

Schematic design for a water transit terminal at Poplar Point on the Anacostia River, and adjacent development.

Images © Michael Winstanley Architects & Planners

Presidential Citation for Urban Catalyst

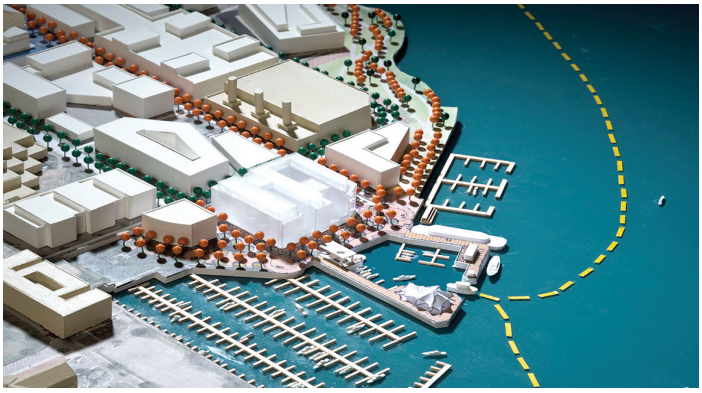
Potomac River Transportation Framework Plan

Washington, DC, Region

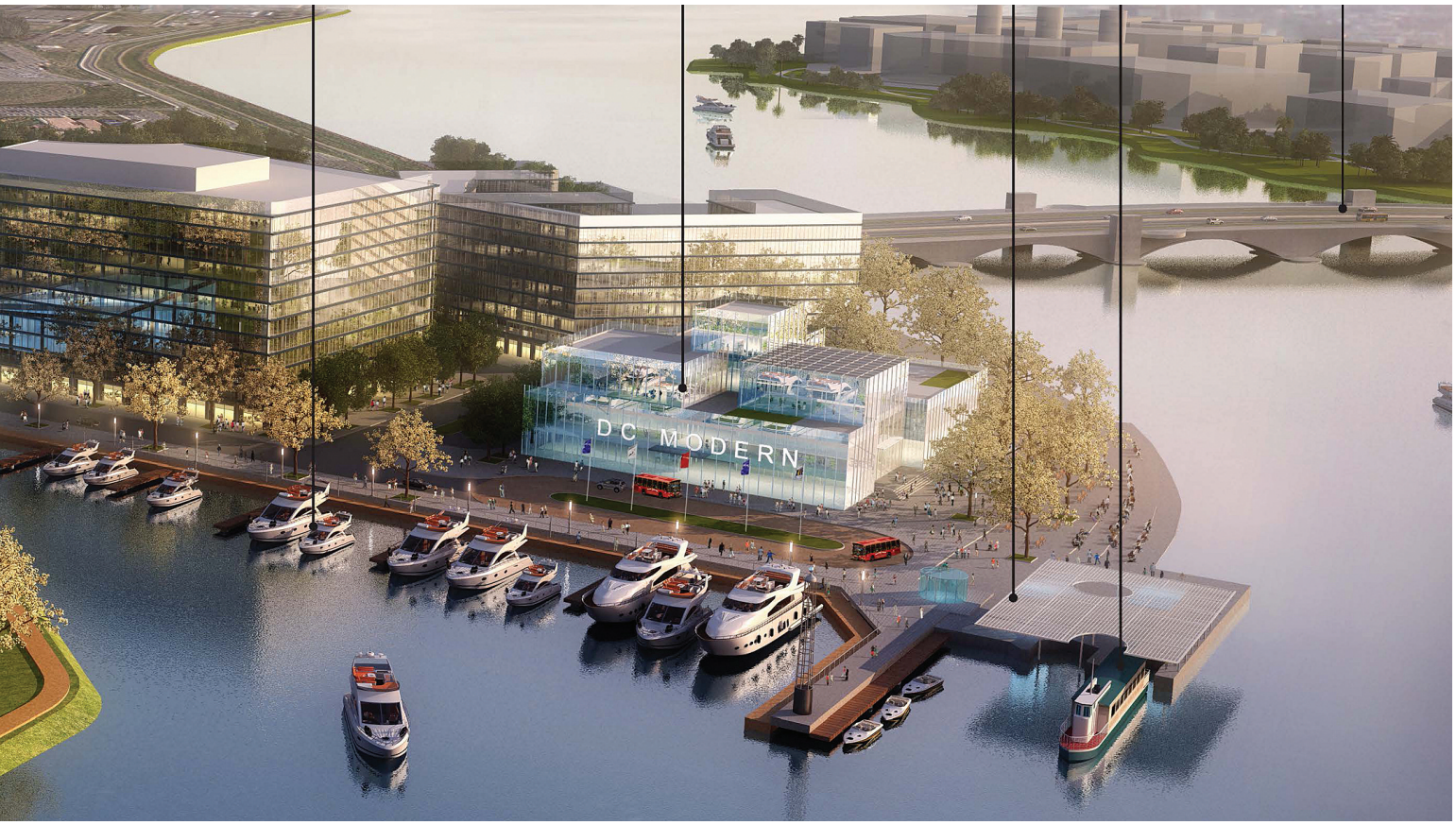
Michael Winstanley Architects & Planners

Today it is easy to forget that Washington, DC, was once a fairly significant port, with both the Potomac and Anacostia rivers carrying substantial commercial and military water traffic. Like many American cities, DC gradually lost connections to its waterfront with the rise of the automobile and rail transit. Recently, however, the city has witnessed a wave of waterfront development that has led to speculation about the rivers' potential as the basis for a new, water-based transportation network.

The Potomac River Transportation Framework Plan, developed by **Michael Winstanley Architects & Planners,** demonstrates the broad potential for such a system. The plan targets three primary user groups. The first consists of regular commuters, many of whom face a daily slog along clogged roads or via crowded subway trains between northern Virginia and the District. The proposed ferry service from Alexandria to Southwest DC, to cite one example, could cut average commute times by more than 75%. The second target group is tourists, who would enjoy easy and picturesque links to popular sites such as Mount Vernon. The final target market is the federal government—more specifically, military personnel who frequently need to travel among seven major facilities already located along the waterways, including the Pentagon, Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, and even as far downriver as Quantico.


Model showing a proposed water transit terminal at Buzzard Point, near Ft. McNair.

The initial plan calls for a total of 31 landings, many of them closely connected to existing Metro stations or other land-based transportation nodes. The proposed system would require minimal infrastructure compared to roadways and rail networks while helping to reduce fuel consumption. Perhaps best of all, it could help to turn a long-neglected resource into a true urban asset.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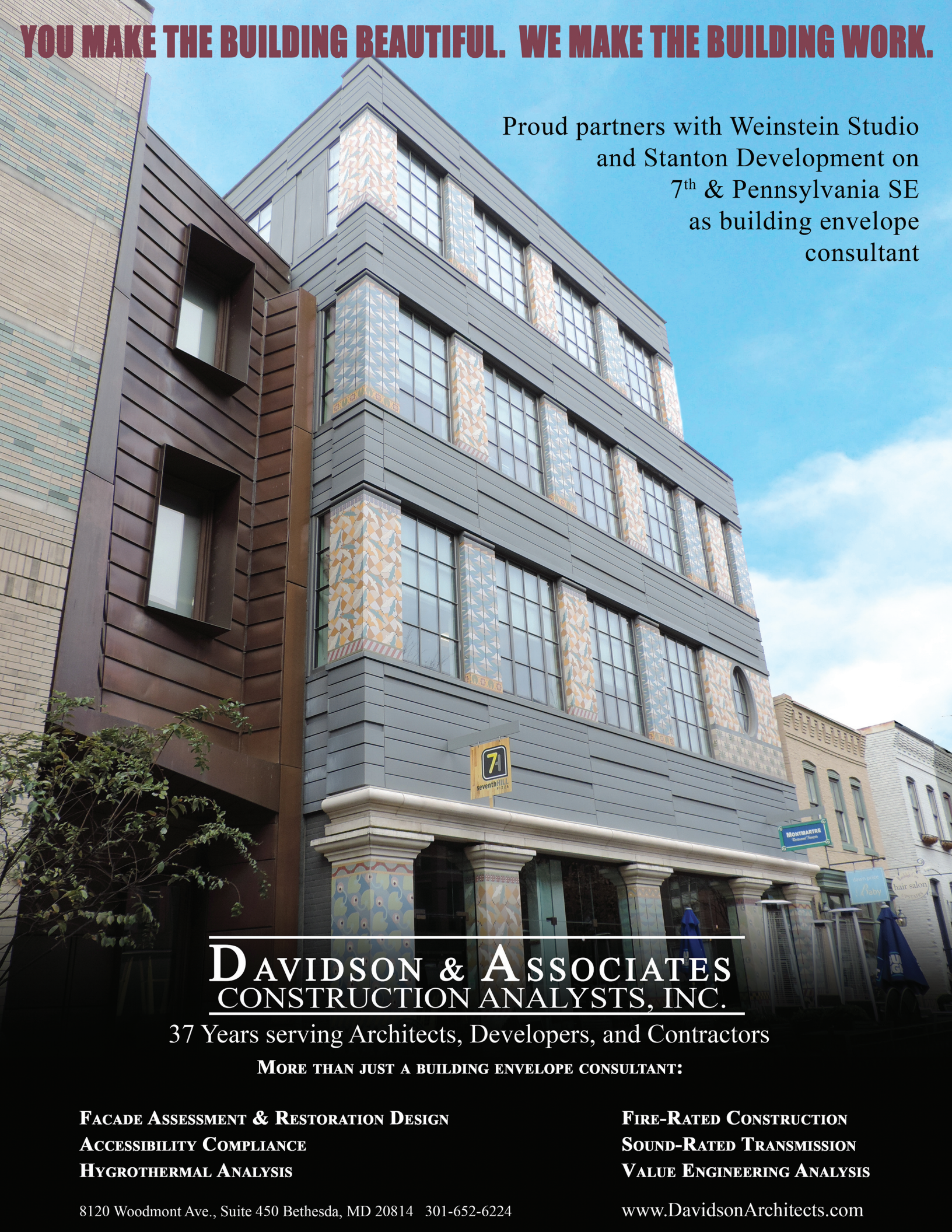

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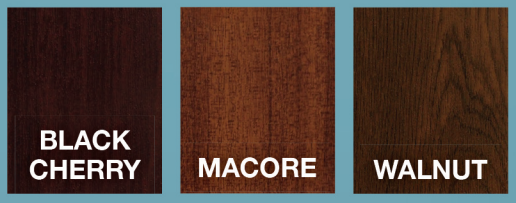

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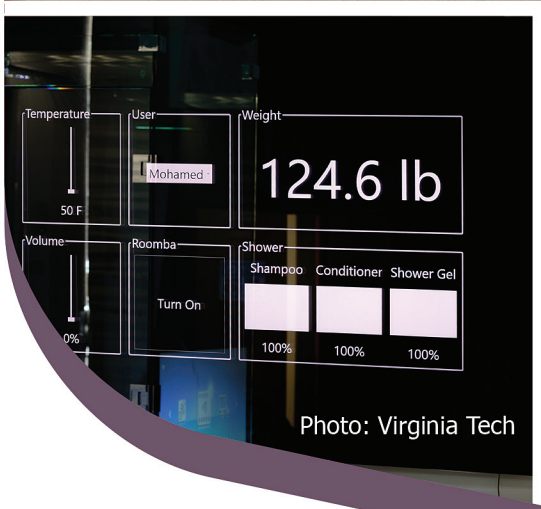

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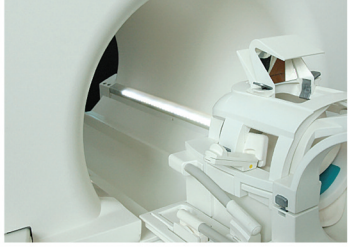

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